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**POPULIST FOREIGN POLICY MAKING BY RIGHT-WING EUROSCEPTICS  
IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

MA thesis

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I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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# **PAREMPOPULISTLIKE EUROSKEPTIKUTE KUJUNDAMINE EUROOPA PARLAMENDIS**

## **VÄLISPOLIITIKA**

Gert Siniloo

### **Resümee**

Töö keskmes on Euroopa Parlamenti kuuluvate parempopulistlike euroskeptikute välispoliitika. Ehkki nii akadeemiline kui ka näiteks ajakirjanduslik huvi populistlike parteide vastu on eriti viimastel aastatel aina kasvanud, on populism mõistena jätkuvalt kontseptuaalsete vaidluste tulipunktis. Selles töös on mindud kaugemale üksnes populismi kui mõiste ümber käivate diskussioonide nentimisest ning erinevate autorite lähenemised on ühendatud ülevaatlikuks raamistikuks, millele on lisatud euroskeptitsismi mõiste ja ülevaade. Nõnda on loodud uudne lähenemine, mille alusel uuritakse, kuidas kujundavad parempopulistlikud ja euroskeptilised fraktsioonid välispoliitikat Euroopa Parlamendis. Resolutsiooniettepanekutel, parlamentaarsetel debattidel ja hääletustulemustel tugineva analüüsi käigus selgub, et vastupidiselt levinud arvamusele pole parempopulistlikud fraktsioonid EFDD ja ENF parlamendi igapäevatööst või koostööst teiste fraktsioonidega sugugi kõrvale jäetud, ehkki EFDD osaleb märksa sagedamini resolutsioonide ühisettepanekutes. Siiski hääletavad teiste fraktsioonide esindajad regulaarselt EFDD ja ENFi ettepanekute poolt, kuid mõnele erandile vaatamata kipub selline toetus olema juhtumipõhine ja seega pigem juhuslik.

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## **Introduction**

Populism is these days one of the most commonly used political catchwords. With recent election and referendum results in the United Kingdom, the United States, France, the Netherlands, Germany and elsewhere, many analysts and commentators are contributing the success of certain parties and politicians to populism. In journalism and in the public and political debate, populism tends to have a negative meaning. Almost no parties or movements define themselves as populist, and rhetoric or proposed policies linked to populism are usually not commended. Despite the extensive use of the term, especially in the past couple of years, populism remains a concept that everybody is talking about, but few are able to define it. Research on populist parties and politicians is wide-ranging in the academia, with traditional parties and party systems increasingly losing attractiveness as research subjects (Mudde 2016: 23). Nevertheless, the concept of populism is highly contested, the acknowledgement of which tends to be a certain feature of every article and study on populism (Moffitt and Tormey 2014: 382). However, there are concepts that most scholars accept as integral to defining populism. ‘The people’ and ‘the elite’ are the most common ones, with many scholars defining populism, at least to some extent, as an antagonistic relationship between the two. The consensus usually stops here. A reader of the literature on populism will find the concept being defined as an ideology, a political or communication style, a strategy, a movement, a syndrome, or something else.

This thesis analyses right-wing populist and Eurosceptic foreign policy making in the venue of the European Parliament. This is the most precise description of this paper, and at the same time it is laden with several concepts. In order to go beyond the mere fact about the contestation of populism, this thesis starts with a comprehensive overview of the most influential scholars and their writings on populism. In Chapter 1, a conceptual and theoretical overview is presented, which consists of three parts. First, an examination of several definitions of populism and its central features is provided. Various strands within the literature on populism are discussed, with frameworks of different scholars interlinked to provide a thorough overview of prominent scholars and their ideas. Second, the concept of Euroscepticism is discussed. This might seem odd at first, given the centrality of populism in this thesis. However, the political parties and party groups under

research in this paper are examined through the arena, where they all have a chance to exert at least some influence in foreign policy – the European Union (EU), and namely the European Parliament (EP). In many cases, such as with the United Kingdom Independence Party and the Five Star Movement, Euroscepticism is as much a part of their political nature, views and ideology as is populism. Moreover, the current European Parliament came into office after elections in 2014, which were widely portrayed as giving rise to Eurosceptics and populists. Therefore, it is the view of this author that a conceptual framework combining both populism and Euroscepticism provides a far-reaching and unique basis for making sense of the empirical part of this thesis.

Third, the notion of populist foreign policy is analysed from a theoretical perspective. Fourth and finally, as a bridge between the conceptual framework and empirical analysis, foreign policy making in the European Parliament is described and discussed from both theoretical and practical angles.

Before moving to the analysis of data, the dataset and methods are introduced in Chapter 2. For the purpose of this paper, the author developed an original dataset on the basis of the European Parliament Plenary online database. 188 motions for resolutions, submitted by the party groups Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) and Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF), were selected, based on their policy field and content. The time-period under investigation concerned the ongoing term of the EP, starting from July 2014 and running through December 2017. The vast majority of the motions were analysed quantitatively, while six motions for resolutions were included in case studies, seeking to answer the ultimate question of this paper: according to which rationale and in the light of which factors do populist right-wing Eurosceptic party groups in the European Parliament conduct foreign policy through motions for resolutions? This was explored through qualitative content analysis, by looking at the subject matter of the motions, corresponding parliamentary debates and roll-call voting records.

An important thing to note is that this thesis covers only right-wing populist and Eurosceptic parties and party groups. While it is certainly true that there are other party groups in the EP that include populist, Eurosceptic or both types of parties and politicians, the theoretical combination of populism and Euroscepticism makes the EFDD and ENF groups the ‘purest’ representatives of populist foreign policy making. In other words,

there is much less Euroscepticism in other political groups, where populist parties do belong to. This issue is elaborated on in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 includes the empirical analysis of this thesis. It starts with a description of both EFDD and ENF as groups, as well as all the national parties belonging to the two groups. The descriptions cover basic information such as founding dates and party leaders, but also introduce the core ideological positions of the parties. Already existing literature on the parties serves here as the main reference point. Preference has been given to as recent articles as possible, in order to avoid missing late changes that may have occurred in the positions of the parties. The analytical part continues with an overview of statistical data on joint motions for resolutions, where members of EFDD, ENF or both groups have participated. Motions of resolutions that have been submitted by EFDD or ENF alone are also presented, based on statistical data. The results are presented on Figures 1 and 2. Six motions for resolutions, which are discussed as case studies, constitute the most important empirical part of this thesis. Based on the content of the motions and parliamentary debates, the foreign policy views of EFDD and ENF on particular matters are analysed. Moreover, Table 5 provides data based on roll-call voting records, which show how successful EFDD and ENF have been in advancing their foreign policy agendas in the EP. The data also demonstrates, which party groups share the views of EFDD and ENF members on specific foreign policy issues. Chapter 3 ends with presenting the general empirical findings of this thesis. Finally, the conclusion discusses the findings in the context of the conceptual and theoretical overview. Topics for future research are also provided in the conclusion.

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## **1. What is populism? A conceptual and theoretical overview**

As Mény and Surel (2002: 3) point out, populism has become a catchword, referring to ‘newborn political or social movements which challenge the entrenched values, rules and institutions of democratic orthodoxy. Yet, despite the extensive use of the term, especially in the past couple of years, ‘populism’ remains a concept that everybody is talking about, but few can define it. This is also true for scholars, who do research on the matter. Populism is a hotly contested concept. Some scholars have even compared the level of contestation of populism to the one of ‘democracy’, another debated concept (Müller 2017). Therefore, it is no surprise that populism means different things to different people. Like Mudde (2004: 542) points out, ‘populism’ is used to describe opportunistic policies with the aim of quickly pleasing the people/voters – and so ‘buying’ their support – rather than looking (rationally) for the ‘best option’. Another interpretation, according to which populism is a ‘highly emotional and simplistic discourse that is directed at the ‘gut feelings’ of the people’ (Mudde 2004: 542), has its supporters. Some analyse populism through the lens of social psychology, associating it with isolated, economically insecure and unsophisticated personalities (Lipset 1963: 178), while others reject this approach (Müller 2017: 16-18). Although there are studies that have rejected the popular notion that populist voters are uneducated or economically worse-off (Priester 2012: 17), it still attracts its supporters.

These definitions, though instinctively plausible, have several misgivings, because, for example, mainstream parties could also make opportunistic decisions, or populist voters might have a higher education and earn tens of thousands of euros per year. It remains unclear and debated, when political actors or a policy pursued becomes ‘populist’. In this chapter, the concept of ‘populism’ is discussed, based on a review of key authors in populist research. While it is true that there is no such thing as a theory of populism (Müller 2017: 2) and that the main characteristics of populism are not agreed upon, there is a broad variety of literature on the concept of populism, and even shared definitions or characterisations. In addition to definitions, a description of the core features of populism is provided in Chapter 1. Following that, populism will be linked to Euroscepticism, which is a crucial concept to understand for the purpose of this thesis. Finally, the notion



of populist foreign policy is examined, after which the theoretical and practical aspects about foreign policy making in the European Parliament are introduced.

### **1.1. An ideology, a style or a strategy? Definitions of populism**

The concept of populism is a highly contested one in the academic field and therefore lacks a clear definition. Nevertheless, several attempts have been made to define the phenomenon. Although disagreements exist already on the categorical level (ideology vs strategy, or style), not to mention the key features, most authors tend to agree that populism entails the description of the relationship between the people and the elite, and this is usually described in antagonistic terms, e.g. the people vs the elite (see also Table 1 on p. 13). However, the consensus stops there. Are populists those political actors who call themselves or are called ‘populists’? Is populism only an appeal to the people? Is populism simply connected to ‘irresponsible’ or ill-designed policies? Is populism simply criticism towards ‘the elite’ or the status quo? Or is populism simplistic, easily understandable rhetoric, addressed to the ‘common people’?

Although there is no consensus on the defining features of populism, the term is widely understood as including ‘an appeal to ‘the people’ and a denunciation of ‘the elite’ or ‘the establishment’” (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 5). Moreover, critical attitudes toward ‘the establishment’ and laudation of the ‘common people’ are seen as central to populism. In his widely cited article ‘The Populist Zeitgeist’ (2004), Mudde offers a definition of populism, based on the ideational approach:

*/.../ an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people. (Mudde 2004: 543)*

Here, antagonism plays a significant role, because people and the elite are set into opposition. The primacy of popular sovereignty also comes to fore, opposing the moral corruption of the elite through the virtuous general will (Gidron and Bonikowski 2013: 6). Drawing from, among others, the works of Mudde (2004) and Canovan (1999), Kriesi and Pappas (2015) also opt for the ideational approach. Their definition of populism

views it as ‘an ideology that splits society into two antagonistic camps, the virtuous people and some corrupt establishment, effectively pitting one against the other’ (Kriesi and Pappas 2015: 8).

So defined, populism has at least two opposites. First, elitism, which Mudde sees as ‘populism’s mirror image’ (Mudde 2004: 543), referring to the viewpoints of the moral elite, instead of people who are considered amoral. Elitism, like populism, is essentially monist, except it is the elite who is virtuous and ‘good’, according to the elitist. In the same way as populists want the people to be the sole source of political power, elitists desire the same role for the elite. Second, pluralism, which counters both populism and elitism, viewing society as a heterogenous entity that consists of overlapping groups and individuals with different ideas and interests. Pluralists are therefore in favour of several power centres and consensus-building among the various societal groups. The non-embracement of a pluralist worldview is something that Mudde uses to determine populist actors. In other words, parties and political movements who accept pluralism fall outside the populist categorisation, according to Mudde (Mudde 2004: 544-545; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 7-8).

At this point, the notion of ‘thin ideology’ needs elaboration. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017; see also Mudde 2004) distinguish between ‘thin’, such as populism, and ‘thick’, such as liberalism or conservatism, ideologies. This distinction goes back to Niekerk (1972: 37), who suggested that populism does not have ‘the same level of intellectual refinement and consistency’ as classical, fully-fledged ideologies. Owing to Freedman’s description of ideologies as bundles of loosely interrelated ideas, Mudde’s definition of populism also leaves the door open for other ideologies to be fused with both right-wing or left-wing preferences (Gidron and Bonikowski 2013: 6). As Mudde explains, populism can therefore be easily linked to other ideologies, ‘thin’ or ‘full’, since populists themselves do not have all the answers to major political questions. The ‘thinness’ of populism then becomes evident through the limited number of core concepts that populists use. Another argument to consider populism in ideological terms is put forth by Stanley (2008: 95), who views actually-existing populism to be inevitably linked to the context of hospitable full ideologies, because its thin nature means that it cannot stand alone as a practical political ideology: ‘it lacks the capacity to put forward a wide-ranging and coherent programme for the solution to crucial political questions’. For Stanley, the

ideological nature of populism derives from how populism ‘conveys a particular way of construing the political in the specific interaction of its core concepts’ (Stanley 2008: 95). Taguieff (1997: 7) expands on populism as an ideology and proposes that populism, being constitutively ambiguous, can be understood as an ideological corruption of democracy, where populism becomes ‘essentially a matter of challenging a political system based on parliamentary representation of ‘the people’. The notion of a ‘thin’ ideology is somewhat shared, albeit outside of solely ideological terms, by Mény and Surel (2002: 6), who see populism as an ‘empty shell which can be filled and made meaningful by whatever is poured into it’.

Despite scholarly consensus about the defining features of populism, there exists a lively debate about what populism actually is: an ideology, a movement, a syndrome, a discursive style, a form of mobilisation or a political strategy? (Gidron and Bonikowski, 2013; see also Table 2 on p. 15). While Mudde, Rovira Kaltwasser, Stanley and others represent the ideational approach, considering populism to be a ‘thin’ ideology, albeit a ‘thin’ one, Canovan (1999: 4) sees it impossible to define populism in ideological terms, because the anti-elitist mobilisation that populists employ may be a reaction to a completely different ideological environment, compared to the one that is the focus of research, i.e. ‘modern Western democratic countries’. Instead, Canovan defines populism as a political style (1999: 5) or as a collection of movements (Canovan 2004: 242). The approach of Hofstadter can also be categorised as defining populism as a style, although he himself prefers ‘mode of expression’ or ‘rhetoric’ (Gidron and Bonikowski 2013: 9). His ‘paranoid style of politics’ revolves around heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and apocalyptic conspiratorial worldview (Gidron and Bonikowski 2013: 9). Another way to define populism as a style came from de la Torre, who sees populism as a ‘rhetoric that constructs politics as the moral and ethical struggle between el pueblo [the people] and the oligarchy’ (Barr 2009: 39).

A major influence on the discursive approach of research on populism has been Laclau’s work, who admits the symbolic distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ but argues that this is a case of relational ‘empty signifiers’ which vary, depending on the social context. The meaning of ‘us’ and ‘them’ is constructed through the process of identification, where antagonism emerges: specific social groups are described as ‘the people’ and played off

against oppressors. In this sense, populism becomes a part of the struggle over hegemony and power (Gidron and Bonikowski 2013: 10).

Apart from understanding populism as an ideology or a discursive style, some scholars argue that populism is a mode of political strategy. This approach can be divided along three distinct aspects: policy choices, political organisation and forms of mobilisation. Regarding the first aspect, policy choices, the focus has been on particular economic policies that some scholars see as a defining feature of populist politics. Acemoglu et al. (2011) have characterised populism as relating to policies that receive support from a significant fraction of the population but that ultimately will hurt the economic interests of that very same majority. In other words, populism here means advocating for pro-redistribution positions combined with populist language used by political leaders addressing ordinary voters. While this obviously relates to left-wing policies, this may also work when right-wing leaders signal to their voters that they do not support left-wing policies. However, the policy choice approach in researching populism has been criticised for its inability to account for historical variation (Gidron and Bonikowski 2013: 10-11). A critic of this himself, Weyland (2001: 14) has defined populism in terms of political organisation. In his view, populism is best defined as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalised support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers. Here, the content of populist politics does not matter very much, instead, the relationship between populist actors and their voters is a defining feature (Gidron and Bonikowski 2013: 11). Those who counter Weyland by referring to empirical data on the varying type and degree of populist parties, especially in Latin America, see populism more as a form of political mobilisation. Levitsky and Roberts define populism as a top-down political mass mobilisation by personalistic leaders, challenging political or economic elites on behalf of an ill-defined pueblo [the people] (Gidron and Bonikowski, 2013: 12). By admitting the ideological flexibility of populism, Levitsky and Roberts are quite close to the ideational definition of Mudde (2004), with the significant difference being in form: to consider populism to be either an ideology or a form of mobilisation. More elusively, Mény and Surel (2002: 14) also describe populism as a sort of political mobilisation, which is designed to ‘send a message’ to those who govern.

There is research, which demonstrates that different approaches of analysing populism can be combined. Jansen analyses political mobilisation through not only parties but also social movements and offers a definition of populism consisting of two dimensions: mobilisation and discourse. In his view, populism is a political project undertaken by various challengers and incumbents who pursue a wide range of social, political and economic agendas (Gidron and Bonikowski, 2013: 14). Key features of Jansen's approach include 'ordinarily marginalized social sectors' and 'anti-elite, nationalist rhetoric', and the antagonistic relationship between them. In a similar way, Pappas (2012), who conceptualises populism as the flipside of political liberalism, sees the need for a political entrepreneur for populism to occur. When that entrepreneur 'is able to polarise politics by creating a cleavage based on the interaction between 'the people' versus some establishment, thus forging a mass political movement', populism is imminent (Pappas 2012: 2).

**Table 1. Characteristics of the three approaches to populism research**

	<b>Definition of populism</b>	<b>Unit(s) of analysis</b>	<b>Relevant methods</b>
<b>Political ideology</b>	A set of interrelated ideas about the nature of politics and society	Parties and party leaders	Qualitative or automated texts analysis, mostly of partisan literature
<b>Political style</b>	A way of making claims about politics; characteristics of discourse	Texts, speeches, public discourse about politics	Interpretive textual analysis
<b>Political strategy</b>	A form of mobilization and organization	Parties (with a focus on structures), social movements, leaders	Comparative historical analysis, case studies

(Gidron and Bonikowski 2013: 17). Edited by author.

In one of the most recent works about populism, Müller (2017) avoids the abovementioned three analytical categories altogether by defining 'populism' as a 'particular moralistic imagination of politics' (2017: 19). He accepts the widely used

antagonistic relationship between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’, describing the former as ‘morally pure and fully unified’ and the latter as ‘corrupt or in some other way morally inferior’ (Müller 2017: 19-20). However, Müller is not satisfied with the denunciation of the elites on behalf of the people as the only defining feature of populism, calling it a necessary, but insufficient condition. Based on his argument that if critical attitudes toward the elite would be enough, anyone criticising powerholders or the status quo would become a populist, Müller attaches a new characteristic to the contested concept. For him, populists are always antipluralist, meaning that they claim to be the sole representatives of the people. This invalidates political rivals, or the opposition, as part of the corrupt elite. As regards to voters, the populist claim implies that supporters of other political actors than the populists might not even be part of the proper people (Müller 2017: 20).

Müller’s approach is an ambitious one, because the definition in its purest form automatically disqualifies several political parties, movements and leaders that are generally described as populist. As Müller sees it, politicians who are not committed to antipluralism are simply not populists, because populism revolves around a claim to exclusive representation. Put differently, populism is not there, without somebody speaking on behalf of the people as a whole (Müller 2017: 20).

**Table 2. Key features of populism and corresponding theoretical approaches**

<b>Feature of populism</b>	<b>Approach(es)</b>
The existence of two homogeneous groups: ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’/‘the establishment’	Ideational, style, strategy, imaginational
The antagonistic relationship between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’	Ideational, style, strategy, imaginational
The idea of popular sovereignty	Ideational, style, strategy, imaginational
A ‘Manichean outlook’ that combines the positive valorisation of ‘the people’ with the belittlement of ‘the elite’	Ideational, style, strategy, imaginational
A ‘thin-centred’ ideology that is easily compatible with very different other, ‘fully-fledged’ ideologies	Ideational
Moralistic rather than programmatic (normative distinction between ‘the elite’ and ‘the people’)	Ideational, style, strategy, imaginational

(Canovan 1999; Gidron and Bonikowski 2013; Kriesi and Pappas 2015; Mudde 2004; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017; Müller 2017; Taggart 2000). Edited by author.

## **1.2. Key concepts of populism**

In this subchapter, the key concepts included in the definitions and conceptualisations of populism are described in greater detail.

### **The people**

Reference to ‘the people’ can be found in most definitions of populism (Canovan 1999; Mudde 2004; Müller 2017; Pappas 2012; Taggart 2000; Taguieff 1997). It is the concept that stands front and centre in the work of scholars researching the term. It could be said that ‘the people’ is even harder to define than populism, and much of the debate around ‘populism’ actually circles around the supposed vagueness of ‘the people’ (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 9). As Taggart (1996: 32) has noted, populism is ‘of the people but not of the system’. However, the inclusion of ‘the people’ in definitions is very often taken for granted, without a critical reflection about the meaning of the term. The under-

researched status of 'the people' even exists in the field of political theory. This may be so because of the elusiveness and extraordinary variability of the term, as noted by Canovan (2004), who has made several attempts to define the core concept of populism, or because of the flexibility of the idea of 'the people' (Taggart 2000).

Canovan, who speaks of an 'appeal to the people' (1999), equates the people to a recognised authority for populists. In this sense, the people are the source of legitimacy for any populist who, by definition, claims to speak for the people; in other words, to 'claim to represent the democratic sovereign, not a sectional interest' (Canovan 1999: 4). This appeal offers vast opportunities for the populist actor, given the vague nature of 'the people'. Still, three diverse ways of defining 'the people' can be identified:

- 'united people' – appeal to the people against parties and factions dividing it; also people as 'the rulers';
- 'our people' – appeal to 'our' ethnic kin, distinguishing our people from others; also, 'native people' of a country;
- 'ordinary' or 'common people' – those outside the privileged and highly educated elite (Canovan 1999: 5; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 9-11).

In every case, there is also a secondary feature possible to be observed. 'United people' or 'people as sovereign' (Canovan 2004: 247-248) relates to political power; 'our people' or 'peoples as nations' are linked to nationality; and 'common people' has a link to socioeconomic status (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 9).

'People' in those descriptions should be understood as deriving from the Latin word 'populus', which further confuses the real meaning of the term. In English, 'people' also refers to human beings or individuals. As Canovan notes, this ambiguity suggests that sovereign people are a collection of individuals and also a collective body, and that 'people' and their rights are universal, beyond boundaries. There is also the question of collective authorisation, the source of legitimacy for any government. Who makes up the people that have political authority? In history, the boundaries have run along class, geography or ethnicity, not to mention other categories. The contribution of city-states, however, was the notion of popular sovereignty. In other words, a government of the people does not have to be based on ethnicity or nativism (Canovan 2004: 247-248).



Especially in the context of this thesis, the EU's relationship with its people(s) sparks attention. Where does the political authority of the EU come from? There are elections to the European Parliament, which still struggle with the turnout of voters. There is also the aspect of larger and smaller member states: where are the people, whose interests are best considered in EU politics? (Canovan 2004: 247-248).

Keeping the definitions of populism in mind, it is clear that these ambiguities serve populist actors well. 'People' has always meant the political community as a whole and at the same time, a smaller group within it. Privileged parts of societies, 'the elite', who have exclusively enjoyed full political rights throughout most human history, are a part of this equation; the other side is everybody outside 'the elite', who have been called 'common people'. For the luck of populist actors, 'common people' have usually made up the majority of a particular country. That notion still lies at the heart of populist ideology. 'Power to the people' is the essence of populist attitudes, and the ones who stole the power from the people, are named 'the elite' (Canovan 2004).

As Taggart notes, the idea of 'the people' is so essential to populism because of the flexibility and malleability of the term. Still, Taggart defines several features of 'the people' that make them populist objects:

- numerousness, meaning that many (if not most) people are on the side of populists;
- monolithic entity, meaning that the people are united, fully formed and self-aware;
- embodiment of certain virtues (silence, working, paying taxes, ordinariness, decency, etc.);
- lacking political ambition, but only until a sense of looming collapse emerges (Taggart 2000: 93-94).

For Taggart and Canovan, the features that make 'the people' who they are provide a crucial understanding of defining populism. The virtues and characteristics that people hold are associated with who they are certainly not: the morally and socially corrupt elite, establishment or power-holders. As Taggart says, populism 'celebrates the people' (Taggart 2000: 91), especially when the values of the people are in contrast with the values of the elite. Interestingly, Taggart does not actually consider 'the people' to be the

central feature of populism, calling this association a potential dead end (Taggart 2000: 98). His own conceptualisation of populism lies mainly on the concept of ‘the heartland’, the imagined territory of the populists, with its clear set of boundaries and a single populace.

Similarly with Taggart, who sees ‘the people’ as a flexible and malleable term, Müller considers ‘the people’ to be a vague concept. His antipluralist definition of populism includes the core claim of populism: that only some people are really ‘the people’. In other words, those who do not support populist parties may themselves be outsiders, not part of the ‘real people’. Moreover, only the populist politicians can be successful in determining those who belong to the real or true people. According to Müller, this is nothing more than an illusion, because there is no such thing as a single, unified people. ‘The people’ do not go beyond all political forms, they do not exit existing democratic procedures, and they are not morally unified (Müller 2017: 19-23; 27-28). Ultimately, Müller refers to Habermas, by admitting that ‘the people’ can only appear in the plural (Habermas 1994: 607). While ‘the people’ are central to definitions of populism, they are incomplete without turning to the next group, viewed as homogeneous by populists: ‘the elite’.

### **The elite**

As with ‘the people’, the term ‘elite’ or ‘establishment’ is a recurring feature in definitions of populism (Canovan 1999; Mudde 2004; Müller 2017). However, this does not mean that the concept of ‘the elite’ enjoys a consensus or even wide attention among scholars. As Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) point out, not many authors have indulged in discussions about the meanings of ‘the elite’ in populism. The two authors themselves see morality as a crucial aspect here, owing to their definition of populism that includes ‘the corrupt elite’ (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 11).

Although the obvious answer would be that ‘the elite’ relates to first and foremost to mainstream politicians who have enjoyed power for years, this is not exclusively so. ‘The elite’ who is the target of populist critique may also be economic, cultural or connected to the media. The common denominator, however, seems to be that ‘the elite’ are morally corrupt, which also makes it easier to see them as a distinct group, even if there may be rivalling factions within ‘the elite’.

Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) offer a set of criteria for the basis of defining ‘the elite’, which are often combined:

- the basis of power, meaning people who hold leading positions in different spheres of public life but excluding populists themselves and people sympathetic to them;
- the basis of economic class, meaning wealthy people who are connected to politicians that represent their ‘special interests’;
- the basis of nationality or ethnicity, meaning powerful people who are seen as outsiders or who are foreigners (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 12-16).

While part of the populist critique is targeted at people in power based on their position, it may also be addressed to ‘elite values’. Canovan (1999) analyses populism in a structural sense, seeing elite values as the key distinction between populists and ‘new social movements’ that also attack established power-holders. Thus, not only the political establishment is criticised by populists but also those who form opinions in the academic and media circles. In this case, the perceived values of ‘the elite’ also predict the values of populists. If the political culture of the elite advances liberal values such as individualism, internationalism, multiculturalism and belief in progress, as is the case in most Western countries, it is not a surprise that populist values are quite different and resist those of the elite’s (Canovan 1999: 3-4). Those embodying ‘elite values’ do not even have to be powerholders. They may be regular people who are attacked for being ‘progressive or ‘politically correct’ (Mudde 2004: 561; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 16).

### **General will**

The concept of general will, at least when defined as such, is exclusive to the ideational approach of populism research, specifically to the definition by Mudde (2004). For him, ‘general will’, or ‘volonté générale’, is a central part of his definition, equally important to the antagonism between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’, and one that must be present to categorise phenomena as populist (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012: 151). As Mudde and Kaltwasser define it, populism is also about the “idea that all individuals of a given

community are able to unify their wills with the aim of proclaiming popular sovereignty as the only legitimate source of political power” (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012: 151). This idea goes back to Rousseau’s idea of self-government of the people and the distinction between the general will and the will of all (*‘volonté de tous’*), where general will meant the capacity to form a community and legislate to advance the common interest, and the will of all was the sum of particular interests at a given point in time. Inherent in the populist employment of the idea of ‘general will’ is the critique of representative government, developed by Rousseau. Therefore, populist actors tend to support the implementation of various mechanisms of direct democracy. This idea also provides populists with arguments to attack the political elite, who are in their view incapable of implementing what the people want. Although ‘general will’ is a core concept in Mudde’s definition, it is actually inseparable from ‘the elite’ and ‘the people’, through a specific logic that appeals to the general will of the people in order to challenge the status quo, represented by the elite (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017: 16-18). Müller, who uses the term ‘popular will’, sees the idea of populist representation distorted. For him, populists may give the impression that they hold dear the will of the people, but what they are actually engaged in doing so, is ‘symbolic representation’ of the ‘real people’ (Müller 2017: 27). As Müller notes, this is due to populists considering ‘the people’ as a fictional entity that exists outside established democratic procedures but is still homogeneous and morally unified. Furthermore, there is a major difference between this idea of populist representation and ‘general will’, as developed by Rousseau. While Rousseau intended actual participation by the citizens, populists do not. Their understanding of ‘the real people’ allows them to deduce political promises and actions based on the identity of their constituents, ‘the people’. Therefore, populists represent some kind of symbolic substance, not the ‘general (popular) will’, as it might seem (Müller 2017: 27-29).

### **The heartland**

A unique concept, developed by Taggart (2000: 95), the ‘heartland’ refers to ‘a territory of imagination’. It is the place that includes the positive aspects of life and can be understood as the ideal society of populism, in a comparable way as other ideologies have ideal societies. Yet, the ‘heartland’ is different because it does not provide a future

projection of the world but instead, goes back in time in the imagination of populists, to bring back the world and values that have been lost and are missing from the present. Taggart sees 'the heartland' as a central concept of populism, having much greater explanatory power than 'the people', because of the latter's ambiguity and variation in definitions. Still, 'the people' are closely connected to the 'heartland' because they occupy it. Moreover, the populist idea of 'the people' as a single and united entity is also present here, since the singularity of the heartland demands a single populace. In addition to the time-dimension of 'the people', boundaries also play a role here. The lines of exclusion are very clear: these are social groups and the elite who populists and 'the people' do not want amongst themselves. Due to this inward-looking nature of the heartland, populism is not compatible with internationalism or cosmopolitanism (Taggart 2000: 95-98). Defined as such, the concept of 'the heartland' is heavily connected to the 'ordinary' and 'virtuous' characteristics of the 'common people'.

### **Exclusionary/inclusionary features**

Taggart (2000) relates the idea of exclusiveness to the very nature of 'the people' by giving more weight to who the people are (or claim to be), not to who they really are (or claim to be). It is the demonization of other societal groups they view as undesirable that gives populists and their followers an enemy, in addition to the elite, to rally against:

The new populism is a very conspicuous attempt to fashion an identity for what is otherwise an amorphous and heterogeneous mass, by singling out particular social groups, be they immigrants, unemployed, or members of an opposing regional or ethnic group, and defining the new populist constituency in terms of who is excluded. (Taggart 2000: 94).

This notion of exclusiveness is shared by Müller (2017), who sees populism ultimately to be not only about the relationship between the people and the elite, but in essence being 'antipluralist', because of the populist claim to be the sole representation of the people. For Müller, the core populist claim is very straightforward: only some people are really 'the people'. This also means that those who do not support populist parties may themselves become outsiders, not part of the 'real people'. Moreover, only populist politicians can ultimately distinguish between those who belong to the real or true people and those who do not (Müller 2017: 19-23).

Several authors have also determined that populism cuts across ideological cleavages (Rovira Kaltwasser 2013; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012). However, these cleavages are still different in different parts of the world. In Europe, populism is often right-wing and exclusionary in nature, having immigrants and national minorities as targets. In contrast, Latin American populism tends to be inclusionary, mobilising diverse ethnic identities into shared political frameworks. Populism in the United States, however, is something very different from both. There, it is mainly associated with different economic ideologies and political actors, including right and left politics, both in the mainstream and in extreme forms (Gidron and Bonikowski 2013: 4-5).

### **1.3. Euroscepticism: hand in hand with populism?**

For the purpose of this thesis, another concept needs clarification. That concept is Euroscepticism. As populism, Euroscepticism has featured prominently in the media and in the public debate, especially in the past couple of years and after elections to the European Parliament in 2014. Despite widespread use in the media and in politics, Euroscepticism faces a similar problem with populism: few are able to define it. Nevertheless, Euroscepticism has been extensively researched in the past decades. In the following subchapter, a review of definitions and conceptual frameworks of this concept are presented (see also Table 3 on p. 28).

The term ‘Eurosceptic’ has roots in journalism and in politics, not in academia. It was first used in the mid-1980s in the United Kingdom to describe Conservative Members of the Parliament who felt sceptical towards the future of European integration after the Single European Act. This fact has created much research, where Euroscepticism has been downplayed as a concept. The argumentation has been that the concept is simply a label for something else, for example, populism or nationalism. However, while surely Euroscepticism includes aspects of both mentioned concepts, and of many more, it is not fundamentally defined by them (Leruth et al. 2018: 4). The difficulty surrounding conceptualisation and research of Euroscepticism also comes from the negative nature of the concept itself. Euroscepticism implies opposition to some aspect of European integration, which itself is also a vague and elusive term. It is therefore crucial to understand that ‘Euroscepticism describes a set of practices driven by a multiplicity of

ideologies and shaped by a multitude of factors to produce myriad results' (Leruth et al. 2018: 4). As is often the case with populism, Euroscepticism means different things to different people. This also means that a very wide variety of political actors may be considered Eurosceptic, but apart from criticism towards European integration, or plainly institutions of the European Union, there are very few, if any, commonalities between them.

The classic author in studies of Euroscepticism remains Paul Taggart. In his widely cited article, 'A touchstone of dissent: Euroscepticism in contemporary Western European party systems' (1998), Taggart defines the concept as 'the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration' (Taggart 1998: 366). Here, the concept is used in an all-encompassing sense. Taggart's definition has several key elements and implications:

- Euroscepticism exists in the face of an on-going process of European integration;
- Following from this, Eurosceptics are those who stand outside of the status quo of integration at institutional and elite levels;
- Scepticism towards an institutional reality is here understood as opposition, but not only that, because while all opponents of European integration are at least sceptical, not all sceptics are among the opposition (Taggart 1998: 366).

Although Taggart uses the term in a comprehensive sense, he also admits that 'certain parties may well contest some elements of European integration while accepting or indeed actively campaigning for other elements of integration' (Taggart 1998: 366). In other words, Euroscepticism itself is not all-encompassing. Moreover, there exist geographical differences between Western Europe, and Central and Eastern Europe (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2002). This has led to the elaboration, and ultimately, the categorisation of the concept. Given the different national contexts where Euroscepticism may be found, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2002) offer a distinction between two types of Euroscepticism: 'hard' and 'soft'. The first type, 'hard' euroscepticism refers to 'a principled opposition to the EU and European integration and therefore can be seen in parties who think that their countries should withdraw from membership, or whose policies towards the EU are tantamount to being opposed to the whole project of European integration as it is currently

conceived' (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2002: 7). Two identifiers exist to assess whether a political actor is a 'hard' Eurosceptic or not: 1) if the party or movement is a single-issue anti-EU party; 2) and if that political actor calls for a 'fundamental re-casting of the terms on which their country is an EU member' (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2002: 7). The second type, 'soft' Euroscepticism occurs when 'there is not a principled objection to European integration or EU membership but where concerns on one (or a number) of policy areas lead to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU, or where there is a sense that 'national interest' is currently at odds with the EU's trajectory' (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2002: 7). The only identifier in assessing Euroscepticism in this case is to look at the rhetoric regarding a contested EU issue, used by the political actor in question (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2002: 7).

Critical of the definitions and categorisations of Taggart (1998) and Szczerbiak and Taggart (2002), Kopecky' and Mudde (2002) offer a less inclusive definition of Euroscepticism. They distinguish between 'diffuse' and 'specific' support for European integration, where diffuse support means 'support for the general ideas of European integration that underlie the EU' and 'specific' support is 'support for the general practice of European integration; that is, the EU as it is and as it is developing' (Kopecky' and Mudde 2002: 300). The two-dimensional distinction produces a typology of four different types of attitudes towards European integration. It is worth noting that Kopecky and Mudde also include in their analysis those political actors, who are strongly in favour of European integration, also in its current form. Thus, their conceptualisation of Euroscepticism actually goes beyond Euroscepticism itself. Four types of this framework and their description are the following:

- Europhiles, who support the main ideas of European integration that underlie the EU, including both political (pooled sovereignty) and economic elements of integration;
- Europhobes, who do not support or even oppose the main ideas of European integration that underlie the EU;
- EU-optimists, who believe in the EU in its current form and chosen path of development; however, this may still include critical positions towards certain EU policies;



- EU-pessimists, who do not support the EU in its current form and/or the chosen path of development; however, this does not mean that they oppose EU membership (Kopecky and Mudde 2002: 301-302).

These ideal-type categories, based on party positions on Europe, are then enhanced by four dimensions within the four-part typology. Those who are considered Europhiles and hold EU-optimistic positions are described as ‘Euroenthusiasts’. ‘Eurosceptics’, on the other hand, combine Europhile and EU-pessimist views. The ‘toughest’ case, ‘Eurorejects’ are those who have Europhobic and EU-pessimist positions. Finally, a group that has Europhobic tendencies, but still supports the EU, being EU-optimists, are ‘Europragmatists’ (Kopecky and Mudde 2002: 302-303).

Accepting the weaknesses of their initial conceptualisation of Euroscepticism that was pointed out by Kopecky and Mudde, Szczerbiak and Taggart sought to redefine the term in a sharper manner. Using attitudes towards EU membership as the main variable that separated different party positions on Europe was refocused on EU integration and the current trajectory of the EU in terms of extending competencies. In other words, support for or opposition to European integration as projected by the EU at a given time became the key variable, along with attitudes towards actual or planned extensions of competencies of the EU. In their new conceptualisation, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2018) kept their initial distinction between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ Euroscepticism, with the definitions reformulated:

- ‘hard’ Euroscepticism is principled opposition to the project of European integration as embodied in the EU, based on transfer of powers to a supranational institution;
- ‘soft’ Euroscepticism is opposition to the current or future planned trajectory of the EU, based on further extension of competencies, which the EU was planning to make (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2018: 13).

In an attempt to bridge research on Euroscepticism and radical right parties, Vasilopoulou (2011) offers specific indicators for classifying party positions on European integration

and on the EU. Building on existing literature, Vasilopoulou names four aspects of European integration, which are the following: 1) a cultural definition of Europe: the feeling of cultural, religious and historical bonds among the European peoples; 2) the ‘principle’ of European integration: the wish and willingness for cooperation at a European multilateral level; 3) the ‘practice’ of European integration: the EU institutional and policy status quo; and 4) the ‘future’ of integration, aiming at an ever-closer union: the making of a European polity (Vasilopoulou 2011: 229-231). From these four aspects, three patterns of the radical right’s opposition to European integration follows, which strongly rest on sovereignty-based critique (Vasilopoulou 2011: 234). The three patterns are ‘rejecting’, ‘conditional’ and ‘compromising’:

- Rejecting Euroscepticism: a position that implies acceptance of common cultural, historical and religious European characteristics, but strongly opposes the three other aspects of integration and argues for a full withdrawal from the EU;
- Conditional Euroscepticism: an acceptance of the cultural ‘definition’ and approval of the principle of European cooperation, but hostility to the current policy practice as well as the future building of a European polity;
- Compromising Euroscepticism: acceptance of a common European culture, support for the principle and the practice of integration but opposition to the future building of a European polity (Vasilopoulou 2011: 232-233).

Critical of most existing literature on Euroscepticism to this day, including the definitions and typologies referenced above, Flood and Soborski (2018) see Euroscepticism as something else: in ideological terms. They adopt the definition of ideology by Martin Seliger as meaning ‘sets of ideas by which men posit, explain and justify ends and means of organised social action, and specifically political action, irrespective of whether such action aims to preserve, amend, uproot or rebuild a given social order’ (Flood and Soborski 2018: 40). A distinctive point raised by the authors is that ‘attitudes towards the EU should be considered within the system of broad, transnational, macro-ideological currents of thought (liberalism, socialism, conservatism)’ (Flood and Soborski 2018: 44). This rests, at least partly, on the notion that the EU itself produces ideological discourse, of which the most evident example is its promotional literature. A much larger source of

ideological content of the EU includes the laws, institutions and policies of the EU, which Flood and Soborski see as ‘ideologically marked political inputs by its creators over the course of its history’ (Flood and Soborski 2018: 44). Sets of ideas, beliefs and attitudes regarding aspects of EU integration, as proposed by politicians, economic elites or intellectuals, are, however, not full-blown ideologies, because they focus on a limited set of dimensions in societies, insofar as they are connected to the EU. Recalling Mudde’s definition of populism as a ‘thin-centred’ ideology, which rested on the work of Michael Freeden (Mudde, 2004), Euroscepticism may be considered in a similar manner, as a ‘thin’ ideology, or as ‘components or local applications of the major ideologies’ (Flood and Soborski 2018: 43).

Flood and Soborski also present their own typology of group positions towards the EU in general and particular aspects. They note that this typology has no presumption to ideological orientation, because that is too important and complex to reduce it to a ‘thin’ typology. As they see it, this typology is merely an accurate instrument for shorthand summaries. In order to avoid ideological assumptions, the terms in the typology are characterised as ‘value-neutral’ (Flood and Soborski 2018: 39, 41). Their typology consists of seven terms:

- Maximalist: pushing integration as far and as fast as is feasible towards the practical realization of a chosen model;
- Reformist: endorsing advance of integration, subject to remedying the deficiencies of what has already been achieved;
- Gradualist: accepting some advance of integration, as long as it is slow and piecemeal;
- Neutral: choosing not to articulate a position for/against further integration;
- Minimalist: accepting the status quo, but wanting to limit further integration as far as possible;
- Revisionist: wanting to return to an earlier state, usually before a treaty revision;
- Rejectionist: outright refusal of integration, coupled to opposition to participation (Flood and Soborski 2018: 41).

**Table 3. Definitions and typologies of Euroscepticism**

Author(s)	Definition	Typology	Unit(s) of analysis
Taggart (1998)	The idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration		Party manifestos, election manifestos
Szczerbiak and Taggart (2002)	Hard: a principled opposition to the EU and European integration; soft: there is not a principled objection to European integration or EU membership	Hard and soft Euroscepticism	Issue framing (single-issue-party or not), political rhetoric
Kopecky' and Mudde (2002)	Diffuse support: support for the general ideas of European integration that underlie the EU, and specific support: support for the general practice of European integration; that is, the EU as it is and as it is developing.	Europhiles, Europhobes, EU-optimists, EU-pessimists (ideal types); Euroenthusiasts, Eurosceptics, Eurorejects, Europragmatists	Party positions
Szczerbiak and Taggart (2018)	Hard Euroscepticism is principled opposition to the project of European integration as embodied in the EU, based on transfer of powers to a supranational institution; soft Euroscepticism is opposition to the current or future planned trajectory of the EU, based on further extension of competencies, which the EU was planning to make	Hard and soft Euroscepticism	Party manifestos, election manifestos

Vasilopoulou (2011)		Rejecting Euroscepticism; Conditional Euroscepticism; Compromising Euroscepticism	Party positions
Flood and Soborski (2018)		Maximalist, Reformist, Gradualist, Neutral, Minimalist, Revisionist, Rejectionist	Ideological discourse

(Flood and Soborski 2018: 41; Kopecky' and Mudde 2002: 300-303; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2002: 7; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2018: 13; Taggart 1998: 366; Vasilopoulou 2011: 232-233).

#### **1.4. Populist foreign policy – is there one?**

The notion of a foreign policy cultivated by populists might seem strange at first. After all, at least in European countries, populist parties have not been in government very often over the past few decades. Therefore, they have had very little impact on foreign policy, as conducted at the nation state level. Even if populist parties have been part of coalitions, their membership in them has not lasted very long. Notable exceptions to this rule have been the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), who was in government for altogether five years in the early 2000s, Northern League in Italy, who was part of the centre-right coalition for the most part of the 2000s, and Fidesz, who has been the ruling party in Hungary since 2010. Greece is also a distinctive example, because the country has been governed by a coalition consisting of a left- and right-populist party (SYRIZA and the Independent Greeks, respectively). In addition, there have been instances where populist right-wing parties have supported a minority, centre-right government. Examples include the Danish People's Party in the 2000s and the Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands from 2010 until 2012 (Balfour et al. 2016: 24; Mudde 2016: 31-32).

It is true that populist parties might have an impact on foreign policy in some countries, where they have been able to influence the political debate, thus having an indirect impact on foreign policy making and decisions. Nevertheless, populist parties still remain far from key decisions in foreign policy. As pointed out in a recent report on populist foreign policy:

Populist parties have so far not succeeded in directly determining key political decisions, even though they now have a seat at the decision-making table in some countries. In the foreign policy arena, they have not yet influenced major decisions on war and peace. (Balfour et al. 2016: 14)

In their recent account on populist foreign policy, Balfour et al. (2016) mention the ‘perpetual loop of interaction’ (Balfour et al. 2016: 16-17), referring to Christopher Hill. This perpetual loop describes the interaction between domestic and international politics. Especially in the EU, foreign policy has been affected by the blurring of lines between different policy areas, where local, national, EU and international levels collide. This has been true for European integration for decades, in areas such as international trade or, more recently, migration. Internal and external environments have an impact on key policy choices. These blurred lines have led to consistent inside-out and outside-in patterns, where foreign policy influences domestic policies and vice versa. It is here that populist parties can have a real impact on foreign policy, even if they do not belong to the government. As Balfour et al. note, ‘changing societies are shaping and constraining political choices through the emergence of new actors who often contest established norms and practices’ (Balfour et al. 2016: 16). The interdependence of domestic and foreign policy is not exceptional to the EU, but is yet especially obvious here, where this interdependence is institutionalised through various structures (Balfour et al. 2016: 17). In any case, it is evident that populist parties from both sides of the political spectrum have an increasing impact on foreign policy issues, both at national and at EU levels. Populist parties have presence in the media, they have gained electoral support, and they are increasingly becoming coalition partners in governments or even forming them. This thesis takes a narrow approach in terms of researching populist foreign policy. First of all, the arena, which is analysed, is limited to the European Parliament. This is because the EP is an exceptional structure, where a great number of populist parties from different

countries are represented. As mentioned above, populist parties are not in government in most EU member states, therefore their influence on foreign policy making is virtually non-existent. Conducting a study about foreign policy, as conducted by populist parties, where they are in government, is not the focus of this thesis. The EP remains a venue where populist parties in the greatest numbers may exercise some influence over foreign policy, at least in the confinements of the EP as a foreign policy actor. Secondly, this thesis only looks at right-wing populists. It is true that there are populist parties within other political groups in the EP, not only in EFDD or ENF. However, when populism is combined with Euroscepticism, ENF and EFDD are the ‘standard-bearers’. In other words, there is much less Euroscepticism in other political groups, where populist parties do belong to. One example is the group of European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL), which hosts radical left parties. Despite there being outright EU-rejectionists and conditional Eurosceptics in that group, the majority of its members can be categorised as ‘Expansionists/Integrationists’, who accept the principle of European cooperation, want further supranational decision making towards a socialist Europe, but reject the current decision-making process in the EU (Keith 2018: 90-93). Thirdly, populist foreign policy, as conducted while in government, has been researched before (see, for example, Verbeek and Zaslove, 2015). This thesis aims to fill an existing gap in literature by looking at how populist right parties conduct foreign policy in the arena they are represented and exert at least some power – the European Parliament.

## **1.5. Foreign policy making in the European Parliament**

Recent literature tends to divide foreign policy making within the EP into formal and informal categories. Regarding the formal aspects, i.e. the EP’s powers according to EU treaties and interinstitutional agreements, the consensus is broad: the EP’s role is rather limited. Keukeleire and Delreux compare these limitations with the ones of national parliaments in EU member states (2014: 85). Member states remain, at least formally, both agenda-setters and decision-makers in the realm of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), with no powers having been delegated to supranational institutions. Moreover, the EP’s powers are even ‘marginal’, at least compared to other policy areas where the body enjoys competences (Riddervold and Rosén 2015: 399-401). Rosén and

Raube write that although foreign policy coordination and cooperation between member states at the EU level has increased, the EP has not gained virtually any new powers in the realm of the CFSP, established in the 1990s; therefore, when only looking at the formal rights, the EP's role can even be described as 'negligible' (Rosén and Raube 2018: 70). The EP's powers in CFSP are consultative, meaning that the body 'has the right to be consulted and informed on the main aspects and basic choices of the CFSP, ask questions and make recommendations to the EU executives' (Rosén and Raube 2018: 70). Decision-making in CFSP follows special procedures, with the Council of the EU not sharing decision-making powers with the EP (Riddervold and Rosén 2016: 687).

Where the EP does have powers to influence CFSP, both formally and proven by evidence, is in budgetary matters and in the adoption of international agreements. Regarding the latter, the EP's consent is necessary for the EU to see international agreements enter into force. This means that the EP has a veto power over agreements, however, with the limitation that it can only accept or reject agreements that have already been negotiated with third actors. Budgetary powers may be a more influential tool of impacting foreign policy at times, but it has also led to constant quarrels with the Council of the EU, the second budgetary arm of the EU. However, both instruments just described mostly relate to other foreign policy areas within the EU framework, i.e. external action and internal policies with external dimensions, remaining outside CFSP (Keukeleire and Delreux 2014: 87-88). For example, the EP's consent to international agreements is not sought when this agreement relates exclusively to CFSP (Riddervold and Rosén 2015: 402).

With regard to the informal category of EP's powers, recent research has shown how the EP has gained more influence, especially through budgetary powers. As Riddervold and Rosén write, 'the EP has been successful in using its budgetary powers to increase its involvement and potential influence in the CFSP (2015: 408). Furthermore, the EP has gradually gained more leverage throughout the policy-making process, from pre-decision to post-decision stages. The impact of the EP has become visible in all stages, mostly through 'indirect and informal means' (Rosén and Raube 2018: 70). Keeping the EP informed and consulting the body has also seen an increase (Riddervold and Rosén 2015: 408; Riddervold and Rosén 2016), as has also the scope of its budgetary powers, especially concerning the funds allocated to the European External Action Service



(EEAS), created after the Lisbon Treaty (Sjursen 2011: 1090). These findings also demonstrate how the EP is seeking to go beyond its formal abilities and procedures in foreign policy matters, being ‘renowned for its continuous battle to seek its own empowerment’ (Rosén and Raube 2018: 73).

The EP has several concrete means of making its voice heard in foreign policy affairs, such as own-initiative reports, parliamentary questions, debates, and formal and informal dialogue with the EU executive (Keukeleire and Delreux 2014: 86). One of the most common tools the EP uses are motions for resolutions, the units of analysis in this thesis. According to Rule 133 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, every member of the EP may submit a motion for a resolution ‘on a matter falling within the spheres of activity of the European Union’ (European Parliament 2017). The motion is submitted to the President of the Parliament, who decides over its admissibility, and refers it to the relevant committee. That committee then decides what to do with the motion; possible options include combining motions for resolutions into joint resolutions, writing up reports, or not taking any action at all (European Parliament 2017). Although the effectiveness of resolutions has been called into question, they still remain one of the most important and commonly used tools of parliamentary oversight that the EP employs, among other ‘rule-based tools rooted in Parliament’s Rules of Procedure or informal instruments and practices’ (Bajtay 2015: 34). One foreign policy area, where resolutions might make a difference, is the already discussed matter of international agreements. Adopting political resolutions, which included the EP’s positions for negotiating agreements, was already a common practice before the Treaty of Lisbon. While these resolutions used to be like declarations, in not having much impact, they may now include real conditions of the EP’s consent. This tends to work along the lines of bargaining with the Council of the EU and the European Commission, i.e. in the form of ‘we shall consent, but first you have to add this into the text’. This way, the threat of a veto by the EP may prove politically effective. Examples, where such a strategy by the EP has worked, include free trade agreements with Korea and India (Passos 2011: 54-55). There are also examples, how the EP has used resolutions to promote human rights and democracy in Turkey, linking this to the approval of a trade agreement. Resolutions are the tools the EP uses to call for greater respect for human rights in external agreements of the EU (Zanon 2005: 116), thereby using its expertise and standing to be involved in foreign policy

making and exert influence there, even without formal powers (Rosén and Raube 2018: 81).

As demonstrated, resolutions are widely used tools of the EP to voice its positions in foreign policy matters. In many instances, they have proved to be effective means, which impact foreign policy decisions and design. In any case, resolutions and motions for resolutions, even if voted down, are important analytical units in determining the foreign policy views and principles of the entire chamber, specific committees, or political groups. Therefore, this thesis will now follow with an analysis of motions for resolutions tabled by the two populist right-wing Eurosceptic groups within the EP.

## 2. Data and methods

This thesis seeks to find out according to which rationale and in the light of which factors do populist right-wing Eurosceptic party groups in the European Parliament conduct foreign policy through motions for resolutions. The following analysis of foreign policy making in the EP by the groups Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) and Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) is based on an original dataset collected through the European Parliament Plenary database by the author. The database in question provides data about plenary sittings of the EP, including agendas, reports or motions for resolutions tabled, results of votes, minutes of sittings and much more.

While doing research for this thesis, the author looked at foreign-policy related motions for resolutions that were tabled by the political groups of interest, namely EFDD and ENF, during the current term of the EP that started in July 2014 and is ongoing until after new elections designated for May 2019. Given that the EP's term is ongoing, the end date of motions for resolutions submitted was drawn to 14 December 2017, when the EP held its last plenary session for the year 2017. This allowed to have a research period of 3.5 years, which is more than half of the five-year term of the EP, and should therefore present a comprehensive overview and allow to draw initial conclusions of foreign policy making by EFDD and ENF during the latest term of the EP. Moreover, this paper delivers one of the first accounts of the foreign policy agendas of two right-wing populist party groups in the EP, given that ENF was only established as a group in 2015.

A total number of 188 motions for resolutions belong to the original dataset developed by the author. Only those motions that reached plenary sittings were included in the analysis. This was done partly due to time and resource constraints upon this thesis, but not only that. Although research on all motions for resolutions submitted by either party group would have provided a thorough account of the foreign policy views and agenda of both EFDD and ENF, it would not have indicated the 'success' of motions for resolutions as foreign policy tools in the EP plenary setting, where motions have the chance to become resolutions, i.e. foreign policy statements on behalf of the EP as a body. Furthermore, this approach enables to find out what influence EFDD and ENF hold in the EP in foreign policy matters.

As explained above, resolutions are important tools for the EP to voice its opinions on foreign policy affairs. However, only resolutions adopted by the EP may enjoy the status of providing a platform for the EP to influence foreign policy. Motions for resolutions that are not followed up by responsible committees of the EP may provide an interesting insight into the views of the authors of those motions, but they do not receive the status of an official platform of the EP for making its positions known in foreign policy matters. Motions for resolutions that are accepted for plenary sittings, however, have the chance of getting adopted, thus becoming the official viewpoint of at least the majority of the chamber. Additionally, these motions are subjects to debate or amendments, or votes, which in the case of roll-call votes may provide an interesting account into the political views and attitudes of members of other political groups than the authors of the motion, if that happens to be the case. In this thesis, that insight is delivered by both looking at roll-call votes and analysing parliamentary debates.

Deciding whether the motion for resolution related to foreign policy affairs was done by the author on the basis of the content of the motion. The method applied here, and in analysing parliamentary debates, is qualitative content analysis, the most common method in populism research (Gidron and Bonikowski 2013: 7). The initial selection criterion was to look at motions for resolutions, which included references to third countries or international relations in the title or in the text of the motion. Motions that included content relating to the EU's relations to third countries, conflict situations, internal situations in third countries, international law and relations, human rights situations in certain countries, specific individuals who caused concern, international agreements, migration, humanitarian crises, trade, fight against terrorism, democracy and rule of law were featured in the analysis.

The motions for resolutions are divided into three categories: 1) joint motions that included members from EFDD or ENF, or both; 2) motions that were submitted by either EFDD or ENF; 3) and motions submitted by EFDD or ENF, which were put to a roll-call vote (see Figures 1 and 2 and Table 4). This categorisation allows to provide both a general and more detailed picture of foreign policy making in the EP by the two party groups in order to examine possible coalitions between EFDD and ENF groups, and between them and other political groups in the EP. The detailed analysis of six case studies, based on motions for resolutions that were put to a roll-call vote, includes an

overview of the content of the motion, figures on voting records in support of the motion, and, where applicable, a summary of the parliamentary debate that related to the foreign policy issue at hand. In analysing the debate, the focus is on the members of the party group who submitted the motion, and on the group, whose members provided significant support. The protocols of the corresponding debates were retrieved from the European Parliament Plenary website. In case of statements that were delivered in other languages than English and German, which the author speaks, the text was submitted to Google's machine translation and checked by the author's university colleagues.

As mentioned above, this thesis only examines populist foreign policy of right-wing populists. Although the author admits that there are other party groups in the EP, which host populist parties – such as the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) or the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) –, the theoretical combination of populism and Euroscepticism of this thesis makes the EFDD and ENF groups the 'purest' representatives of populist foreign policy making. In other words, there is much less Euroscepticism in other political groups, where populist parties do belong to. Despite there being outright EU-rejectionists and conditional Eurosceptics in other party groups, the majority of their members can be categorised as 'Expansionists/Integrationists', who are not opposed to the idea of European integration, and in some cases, even desire further supranational decision-making (Keith 2018: 90-93). In other words, the entire palette of populist and Eurosceptic features, as discussed in the conceptual and theoretical overview of this thesis, is fully represented by the vast majority of parties belonging to EFDD and ENF, and by the groups as wholes.

To this end, the analytical part of this thesis is preceded by a brief description of the ideological core of both EFDD and ENF as groups, and of each individual party belonging to either of those groups. In order to avoid conceptual confusion about the defining features of populism, only research that corresponds to definitions and understandings of populism discussed in the conceptual overview of this thesis will be reviewed. Preference has been given to research that has been published after the latest European elections in 2014. This should be a guarantee against recent changes in programs and ideological positions of the parties in question.

### **3. The foreign policy of EFDD and ENF**

Before moving to analyse how populist right-wing Eurosceptic party groups conduct foreign policy in the European Parliament, a description of those party groups and the parties belonging to them is required. In the following subchapter, a brief overview of parties belonging to the EFDD and ENF groups is presented. This introduction focuses on basic information about the parties, such as founding dates and party leaders, but also on the ideological core positions of the parties. Because divulging into extensive descriptions about the ideological affiliation of these parties and party groups would go beyond the scope and purpose of this thesis, already existing literature on the parties will be used as a main reference point. This, however, shows the need for systematic analyses of populist parties, which remain scarce in current political science (Mudde 2016: 28).

#### **3.1. EFDD – who’s who?**

The political group Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy was officially formed in June 2014, following elections to the EP a few weeks earlier (Farage 2014). As of March 2018, EFDD has 44 members from eight different countries (European Parliament, no date). According to its statute, the group’s political platform consists of four goals:

- Freedom and co-operation among people of different states: principles of democracy, freedom, openness, transparency and accountability for cooperation between sovereign European nation states, opposing to the bureaucratisation of Europe and a centralised European superstate;
- More democracy and respect of people’s will: rejection of the notion of a single European people; opposition to further EU integration that exacerbates the democratic deficit and centralist structure of the EU; call for treaty changes or new treaties to be put on referenda;
- Respect for Europe’s history, traditions and cultural values: the right to protect historical, traditional, religious and cultural values; rejection of xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and discrimination in other forms;

- Respect for national differences and interests: freedom of votes, meaning freedom for members of the group to vote as they choose to (EFDD Group 2014).

In addition to the rejection of further EU integration, EFDD cherishes direct democracy, which it mainly sees implemented by referenda at various levels of governance within the EU and its member states (EFDD Group, no date). The group is strongly opposed to the common currency euro and advocates the reinstatement of national currencies (EFDD Group, no date, a).

### **United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)**

UKIP is the single largest party within the EFDD with 20 members, reaching almost half of the total number of members. Undoubtedly, the group's most prominent member is Nigel Farage, who also serves as the President of EFDD, and has previously been the leader of the UK party. UKIP, especially in the persona of Farage, is the 'posterboy' of Euroscepticism, attracting widespread media coverage throughout Europe and beyond. This is also reflected in academia, where UKIP has been researched extensively.

The party was founded in the United Kingdom in 1993 (Hunt 2014). It has enjoyed considerable electoral success over the years, having been represented in the EP since 1999 and winning the EU elections in the United Kingdom in 2014. Euroscepticism still remains the most important issue for the party and its voters but recent research has demonstrated how UKIP, while having links to the mainstream of British politics, shares several parallels with European parties that are generally described as 'extreme right' or 'radical right', with the issue of immigration being the best evidence to support this claim (Widfeldt and Brandenburg 2017: 21-22). Combined with its appeal to the people (in the form of direct democracy), strongly anti-elite sentiments (mostly directed towards EU bureaucrats, but not limited to that), and increasing focus on anti-immigration positions, UKIP is regarded as a populist radical right party, in addition to its almost classical status as Eurosceptic or even 'hard' Eurosceptic (Hayton 2016: 400-402; Whitaker 2018: 110). Some, however, argue that UKIP is still not a radical right party, but is moving toward such a direction, especially after the Brexit referendum (Mudde 2016: 28).

### **MoVimento 5 Stelle (Five Star Movement, M5S)**

The second largest party in EFDD, with 14 members, is the Five Star Movement from Italy. It was founded as a party by Beppe Grillo in October 2009, after a series of public meetings and online campaigning over the course of several years (Witte 2018; Franzosi et al. 2015: 110). The party's leader is Luigi Di Maio, who recently led M5S to a victory in Italy's parliamentary elections (BBC 2018). In the party's delegation within the EFDD, the most influential members by position are Laura Ferrara, the group's vice-chair, and Tiziana Beghin, the treasurer.

Already in 2013, in its first-ever general election, M5S became the second largest in parliament. The party's result in the 2014 European elections was also promising, but weaker than expected (Franzosi et al. 2015: 117). Ever since its creation, M5S has been very critical towards the political elite in Italy, and has also attacked the EU and its leaders (Ivaldi et al. 2017: 359). Its self-identification goes beyond traditional politics and the left-right spectrum, but in literature, M5S is regarded a populist party (Franzosi et al. 2015; Vittori 2017). The movement's populism is seen as a direct appeal to 'sovereign people' in opposition to the elite, in connection to its critical stance towards the EU. As UKIP, the M5S also advocates direct democracy, which was added to EFDD's name to accommodate the movement's wishes (Franzosi et al. 2015: 118). Strong appeals to sovereignty and direct democracy are also recurring features (Vittori 2017). Its position towards the euro is somewhat ambiguous, but the founder, Beppe Grillo, has voiced opposition to the euro and called for Italy's departure from the currency zone. As Franzosi et al. (2015: 114) note, M5S's positions are between 'hard' and 'soft' euroscepticism, and have more to do with criticism of austerity measures than anything else. Empirical evidence has shown that a shift towards more focus on EU integration has taken place after joining the EFDD group (Ivaldi et al. 2017: 358, 367).

### **Les Patriotes (The Patriots)**

This is a party that was founded by MEP Florian Philippot in France only a few months ago, in late 2017. They are hardly newcomers in politics, because Philippot, the party's leader, served for many years as vice president of Front National (National Front),



probably the most researched French party in recent years (Nordstrom 2017). Apart from Philippot, they have two more members in the EFDD group.

The Patriots are against French membership in the eurozone and in the EU. In their program, the party advocates for a 'Frexit': France's withdrawal from the EU on the basis of Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), in order to regain sovereignty, freedom for people and to cooperate with all nations of the world. The party is also keen on direct democracy and referendums. The Patriots see the EU as an obstacle to a serious immigration policy, which they deem crucial. For the sake of traditions, the program reads, it is necessary to reduce immigration heavily (Les Patriotes, no date).

### **Sverigedemokraterna (Sweden Democrats)**

The fourth and last party represented in EFDD with more than one member is the Sweden Democrats. Founded in 1988 in Sweden, the party was elected to the Swedish parliament for the first time in 2010, when they received 5.7 percent of the vote (Sveriges Radio 2014). Its chairman since 2005 has been Jimmie Åkesson. 2014 was the first time for the party to win seats in the EP (Mudde 2016: 30). One of the party's MEPs, Peter Lundgren, serves as the vice-chairman of the EFDD group.

The Sweden Democrats are considered a populist and even radical right party (Mudde 2016: 30; Elgenius & Rydgren 2017: 353). The party's rhetoric focuses on the alleged decline of the Swedish nation and the end of the Swedish welfare state, while this is linked to the absence of foreigners in the perceived golden age of Sweden in the 1940s and 1950s. One of the culprits behind the decline are said to be leftist forces, including socialist and liberal elites who have embraced multicultural values and promoted membership in the EU at the expense of Swedish sovereignty (Elgenius & Rydgren 2017: 354-356). The Sweden Democrats oppose the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), reject Turkey's possible membership in the EU, want to renegotiate the Schengen Agreement, and call for a referendum on Sweden's membership in the EU (Sverigedemokraterna, no date).

### **Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany, AfD)**

AfD is represented in the EFDD group with one member, Jörg Meuthen, who also serves as the group's vice-chairman. Founded in 2013 in Germany, the party gathered close to

five percent of the vote in the 2013 general election, but failed to enter parliament. AfD did better in the 2014 EP elections, receiving seven seats in the Parliament, but infighting over the party's future direction has seen most MEPs elected in 2014 abandoning the party (Schmitt-Beck 2017: 124-125; 144-145). In recent federal elections in September 2017, AfD became the country's third largest party in parliament (Tagesschau 2017). Meuthen, along with Alexander Gauland, serves as party leader.

Alternative für Deutschland is a rather new party but has already gone through major changes from its initial core nature as a single-issue party, focused on the Euro crisis and economic liberalism, to a more broad-based party adopting a populist and right-wing direction. The issues of restricting immigration and rejecting multiculturalism have emerged as new topics for the party, after the split within the party in 2015 (Jankowski et al. 2017; Schmitt-Beck 2017). In its program for the 2017 federal election, AfD stresses sovereignty (both in Germany and in the EU), calls for regular referenda, advocates for an exit from the eurozone, rejects a common European asylum policy, and rejects Turkey's membership in the EU (Alternative für Deutschland 2017).

### **Strana svobodných občanů (Party of Free Citizens)**

Founded in 2009 in the Czech Republic, this party is represented in the EFDD with one member, Jiří Payne, who is also the vice-chairman of the political group. The party leader is Tomáš Pajonk, who was elected in November 2017 (Svobodni 2018). It is not represented in the Czech parliament, having received only a few percents of the general vote in parliamentary elections since its establishment (Kaniok 2017: 437).

The Party of Free Citizens is a breakaway party from the Civic Democratic Party, a moderately Eurosceptic political force. It has been described as a niche party, focusing mainly on issues related to EU integration, where its positions tend towards 'hard' euroscepticism. Empirical research among the party's national leadership has shown that the party focuses mostly on deregulation and liberalisation, and opposition to the eurozone, but also on a possible Czech exit from the EU, and promoting Czech interests within the EU (Kaniok 2017: 437-438; 443).

### **Tvarka ir teisingumas (Order and Justice)**

Order and Justice, a Lithuanian party founded in 2002 (Jakobson 2012: 22), is represented in the EFDD with one member, Rolandas Paksas, who also serves as the vice-chairman of the group. Order and Justice have been represented in the Lithuanian parliament since its creation. The party has been regarded populist (Jakobson 2012), and its founder, Paksas, has been seen as the leading right-wing populist in the country (Aleknonis and Matkevičienė 2016: 38). Order and Justice is considered a ‘typical’ populist party, in the sense of appealing directly to the people and denouncing a corrupt political elite. The party does not identify itself according to the left-right spectrum, therefore, its ideology is seen as an ‘odd mixture of populist right-wing and pro-Russian orientations’ (Ramonaitė 2010: 129).

The remaining two members of the EFDD group, Joëlle Bergeron from France and Robert Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz from Poland are independents. Both MEPs are also vice-chairs of the group.

### **3.2. ENF – who’s who?**

The political group of Europe of Nations and Freedom was officially founded in June 2015 (European Parliament 2015). As of March 2018, the ENF has 34 members (European Parliament, no date, a ). According to the group’s charter, the political activity of ENF is based on five principles:

- Democracy: conformity with democratic principles and fundamental rights; a rejection of authoritarian or totalitarian projects;
- Sovereignty: commitment to sovereignty of states and their citizens; rejection of transfer of national sovereignty to supranational bodies and institutions of the EU;
- Identity: preservation of the identity of citizens and nations of Europe, including the right to control and regulate immigration;
- Specificity: recognition of the right of MEPs and member parties to defend their unique economic, territorial, social and cultural models;

- Freedom: defense of individual freedom, including the protection of freedom of speech (Europe of Nations and Freedom 2016).

According to Marcel de Graaff, the co-president of the group, ENF wants a Europe of economic cooperation among nation states, not the current version of the EU, which is attacking European cultures, values and freedom, and is a threat to nation states of Europe (Europe of Nations and Freedom 2016).

### **Front National (National Front)**

Sixteen members in ENF belong to Front National (FN), a French party founded in 1972 (Morini 2018: 2). Nicolas Bay serves as co-president of the ENF group. The leader of the Front National is Marine Le Pen, a former MEP herself, who was elected to the French parliament in 2017 (Front National, no date).

Front National is one of the most, if not the most, researched populist radical right parties in Europe. Mudde (2013: 3) has even described it as a prototype of radical right parties. FN is widely regarded as a populist and radical right party (Goodwin 2009: 322; Ivaldi et al. 2017: 355; Morini 2018: 3; Mudde 2015: 297). Often, FN is also considered Eurosceptic (Brack 2015: 337; Morini 2018). In their recent comparison of populist parties, Ivaldi et al. (2017: 358, 362) have summarised the core features of the ideology of FN: appeal to the people (especially to those who are ‘left behind’); strong criticism of the political, intellectual, financial, media and liberal elite; the claim of true representation of the people’s will; support for referenda and ballot initiatives; and ‘hard’ Euroscepticism, pitting against each other the French and Brussels, bureaucrats and Angela Merkel. FN is also strongly against immigration and multiculturalism. Since the 1980s, the party has had an anti-EU stance. In its manifesto for the 2014 European elections, FN campaigned to end austerity measures, exit the eurozone, and revise the Schengen Agreement (Morini 2018: 4, 11). FN is also committed to renegotiating existing EU Treaties for the sake of national sovereignty, restoring control over its borders, and refusing Turkish membership in the EU (Europe of Nations and Freedom 2016a).

### **Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Freedom Party of Austria, FPÖ)**

The Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) has four members in the ENF group. One of their members, Harald Vilimsky, is also the vice-president of the group. The party was founded in 1956 (Hafez 2016: 104). Its current chairman is Heinz-Christian Strache, serving as the vice-chancellor of Austria following the recent parliamentary elections in the country (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs 2018).

Akin to the Front National, FPÖ has been the subject of extensive research, having also earned the description ‘prototypical’ (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012: 155). The party is often defined as a populist right radical party (Hafez 2016: 102; Halla et al. 2017: 1342; Mudde 2016: 30; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012: 155). Hafez (2016: 102) has recently described the FPÖ as xenophobic, anti-international, hard on immigration, and engaged in ethnic exclusivism. Regarding EU integration, FPÖ is keen on a ‘Europe of peoples’ and rejects multiculturalism, globalisation and mass immigration. The party argues for a Europe based on the association of free peoples and demands that constitutions of EU member states should have priority over EU law (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs 2011). After the creation of the ENF group, FPÖ vowed to be patriotic, strongly oppose the EU’s ‘establishment’, and guarantee the representation of the Austrian people in the EU (Europe of Nations and Freedom 2016b).

### **Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom, PVV)**

Party for Freedom from the Netherlands is represented with four members in the ENF group. Marcel de Graaff is also the co-president of ENF. The leader of the party is Geert Wilders, who serves in the Dutch parliament. PVV is a rather new party, having been founded in 2006. Formally, it only has one member, Wilders, while other politicians and staff of the party act in a different capacity (Vossen 2017: 37, 45).

As both Front National and FPÖ, the PVV is also considered to be a populist radical right party (Bos et al. 2017: 761; Mudde 2013: 3; Vossen 2017: 41). Despite sharing several political positions with Front National and FPÖ, PVV is characterised by an ardent rejection of Islam, mostly on the belief that Islam is a totalitarian ideology. In the context of feared islamisation, PVV and its most prominent member, Wilders, also criticise the ‘progressive’ elite, and appeal to the people, who the party frames as ‘normal Dutch people’. PVV also belongs to the camp of ‘hard’ Euroscepticism, advocating for a

withdrawal from the eurozone and the EU, for the sake of control over its borders, stopping immigration from Islamic and Eastern European countries, and more national sovereignty and freedom (PVV, no date; Vossen 2017: 41-42).

### **Lega Nord (Northern League, League)**

Northern League, a party from Italy, is represented in the ENF group with three members. Until March 2018, the leader of Lega Nord, Matteo Salvini, served as one of the vice-presidents in the group, but he left the EP to become a member of parliament in Italy. Lega Nord became the third largest party in Italy after elections in March 2018, a fact that was also celebrated by ENF (Europe of Nations and Freedom 2018). It has been part of the Italian government on several occasions before (Mudde 2015: 301).

Lega Nord also belongs to the party family of the populist radical right (Brunazzo and Gilbert 2017: 624; Ivaldi et al. 2017: 355; Mudde 2015: 298; Mudde & Kaltwasser 2012: 155). It is also characterised as Eurosceptic (Brunazzo and Gilbert 2017: 624; Morini 2018: 1). In their comparison of different populist parties in Europe, Ivaldi et al. (2017: 358) have outlined the core elements of the radical right populism of Lega Nord: denunciation of the mostly political, but also financial elites, appeal to the exploited or ignored people, and call for referendums. The party is also anti-immigration and rejects multiculturalism (Morini 2018: 4; Brunazzo and Gilbert 2017: 635). Lega Nord takes a 'hard' Eurosceptic position towards EU integration, antagonising Italians and Brussels, bureaucrats and Germany (Ivaldi et al. 2017: 358). It criticises economic austerity imposed by European institutions, supports a referendum on Italy's membership in the eurozone, and sees the EU as an undemocratic and intrusive 'dictatorship' backed by financial elites (Morini 2018: 4, 12-13).

### **Kongres Nowej Prawicy (Congress of the New Right, KNP)**

This party is represented in the ENF group with two MEPs. One of them, Michał Marusik, is also the group's vice president. Founded as recently as 2011 in Poland, the party is headed by Stanisław Żółtek (Szczurbiak 2014).

KNP is described as anti-establishment, socially conservative and radically Eurosceptic (Szczurbiak 2014). KNP's manifesto for the 2014 European elections argued for the abolition of the EU by transforming it to a free trade zone (Backrynowski 2015: 138).

The party also opposes the institutional superstructure, bureaucratic absurdities and subordination to the 'Brussels bureaucrats' of the EU (Kongres Nowej Prawicy, no date).

### **Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest)**

Vlaams Belang, a party from Flanders, Belgium, is represented in the ENF group by Gerolf Annemans, who is also the group's vice-president. The party was founded in 2004 as a reorganisation of the former Vlaams Blok (Kahmann 2017: 404). The current leader of Vlaams Belang is Tom Van Grieken.

The party of Vlaams Belang is widely considered to belong in the family of populist radical right parties (Adam and Deschouwer 2016: 1294, 1299; Kahmann 2017: 398; Mudde 2015: 298; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012: 160). It is strongly anti-immigrant, anti-establishment and Flemish nationalist (Adam and Deschouwer 2016; Kahmann 2017: 404). Vlaams Belang supports the independence of Flanders. Regarding EU integration, the party describes itself as 'strongly pro-European', but opposes the 'superstate' of the EU, argues for the abolition of the eurozone, and rejects Turkish membership in the EU (Vlaams Belang 2016).

### **Die Blaue Partei (The Blue Party)**

The Blue Party is represented in the ENF group by Marcus Pretzell, who also serves as the vice-president of the group. The party was founded in 2017 as a breakaway party from AfD by associates of its former leader, Frauke Petry. The party's chairman is Michael Muster (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 2017). Given its very short history, there are only journalistic accounts available about the party. Its published program calls for more direct democracy, border controls, a tighter asylum policy, a EU based on sovereign nation states, and departure from the eurozone (Blaue Wende 2018).

Remaining members of the ENF group include Gilles Lebreton, a member of Rassemblement Bleu Marine, which is associated with Front National, and Janice Atkinson and Marco Zanni, who are both independents. Atkinson is also a vice-president of the group.

### **3.3. EFDD and ENF – how do they conduct foreign policy?**

This subchapter is divided into two parts. First, an explanation of the gathered data, along with graphs, are provided to demonstrate general findings about tabled motions for resolutions by EFDD and ENF or joint motions for resolutions including representatives of the two political groups. Second, motions for resolutions that were decided upon with roll-call votes are analysed more closely as case studies in order to examine possible coalitions between EFDD and ENF, and between them and other political groups in the EP. This analysis should provide an insight into how EFDD and ENF conduct foreign policy in the EP, garner support for their foreign policy agendas, and what is the substance of these agendas.

#### **Joint motions for resolutions**

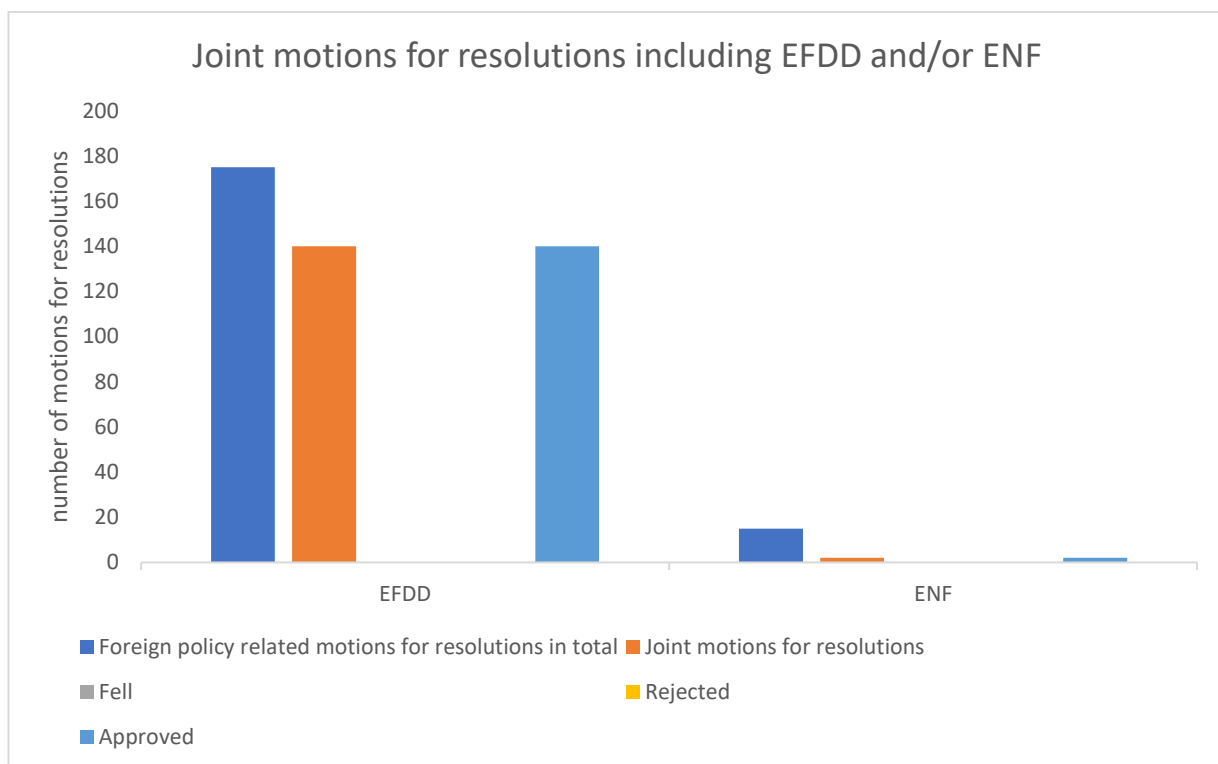
Contrary to widespread belief, populist Eurosceptic party groups in the EP do not spend their time only by giving flamboyant speeches during plenary sittings, without taking much part in other parliamentary work. This may be true for certain parties and politicians within those party groups, but it is certainly not true for the party groups in general.

Figure 1 (see p. 50) shows data about the number of joint motions for resolutions, whose signatories also included members from the EFDD and ENF groups. The obvious conclusion to draw from this graph is that the EFDD group are much more involved in conducting foreign policy through motions for resolutions than their counterparts from ENF. Moreover, EFDD members are significantly more often giving their signatures to motions that are combined into joint motions for resolutions. The extent to which the two groups differ is significant. While the EFDD has proposed 175 motions for resolutions that relate to foreign policy matters during the current term of the EP, which have made it to the plenary, the corresponding figure for the ENF is only 15. Furthermore, 140 motions by the EFDD have been combined to joint motions for resolutions and then discussed in plenary, meaning that the EFDD has been on board with other party groups in the EP in numerous foreign policy issues. The same figure for the ENF is only 2. Owing to the nature of joint motions, i.e. discussions and agreements beforehand, all joint motions for resolutions where the EFDD and ENF have been included have been adopted.



Without going into further detail at this stage, two possible explanations may account for these trends. Firstly, the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament state that relevant committees of the EP shall decide what to do with the motions for resolutions that have been submitted and declared admissible by the President of the Parliament. One of the options before the committees is to combine motions for resolutions into joint motions; another one is not to follow up on the motion, i.e. do absolutely nothing. Figure 1 shows very clearly how motions by the EFDD are frequently combined into joint motions with other motions for resolutions. In fact, this happens to most motions related to foreign policy issues and proposed by the EFDD. With ENF, this happens very rarely. It may be that EFDD is just much more interested in foreign policy matters than the ENF and submits more motions, therefore receiving the possibility of having their motions combined with others. It may also be that the motions by EFDD are better structured, more substantial and well-argued than the ones by ENF, therefore they end up as parts of joint motions for resolutions. In any case, it is evident that a very little number of ENF motions for resolutions ever make it out of the responsible committees, while EFDD motions are much more often represented in plenary.

Secondly, considering that motions for resolutions are essentially political in nature, Figure 1 also suggests that the views held by members of the EFDD in particular foreign policy matters are much more in alignment with views held by members of other party groups within the EP than is the case with views of ENF members. These initial observations will be examined closer in the following subchapter.



**Figure 1. Joint motions for resolutions including EFDD and/or ENF.** Based on an original dataset collected through the European Parliament Plenary database<sup>1</sup> by the author.

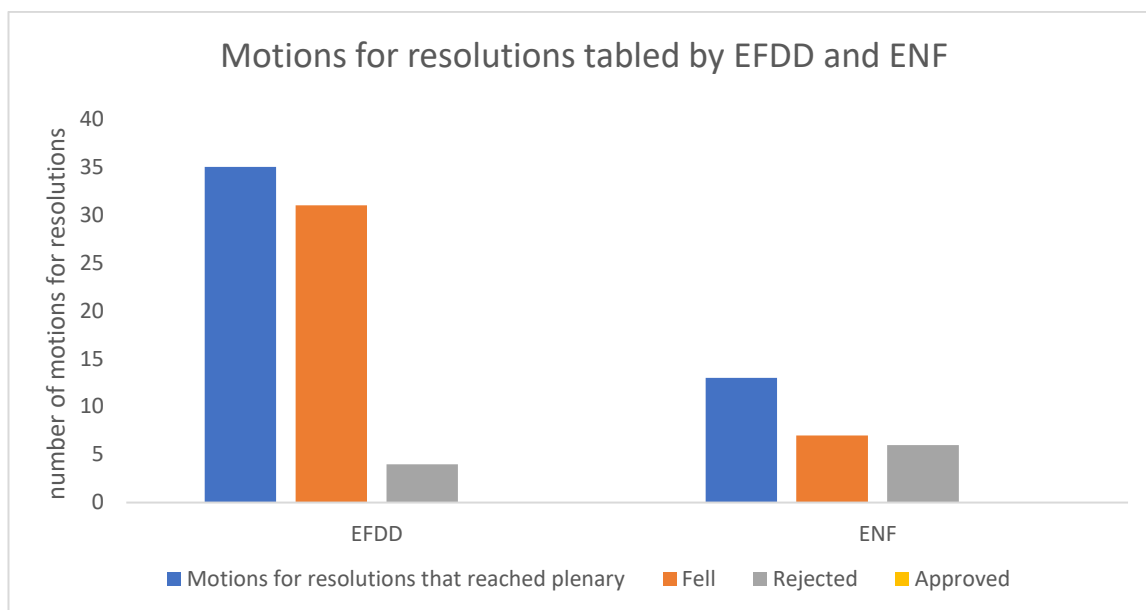
### Motions for resolutions

In terms of shedding light to the foreign policy views of the EFDD and ENF groups, motions for resolutions tabled by the two party groups require further attention. Figure 2 (see p. 52) shows motions for resolutions proposed by EFDD and ENF, which have made their way out of committees to the plenary sitting. Here, the differences between the two groups are not as stark as they were with joint motions for resolutions. Still, data demonstrated on Figure 2 suggest that the EFDD has been much more successful in getting their motions for resolutions to reach plenary sittings. The figure for EFDD is 35 motions, while motions proposed by ENF members were discussed in plenary on only 13 occasions. The possible explanations for these figures are similar to the ones already provided for joint motions for resolutions. Considering the significant role of committees deciding upon further action with motions for resolutions, the higher ‘success rate’ of

<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-submitted.html?tabType=motions> (Accessed 5 March 2018).

EFDD may be accountable to the better structure, substance and arguments in their motions, compared to motions proposed by ENF. Secondly, taking into account the political nature of motions for resolutions, Figure 2 also indicates that the views advocated by the EFDD in particular foreign policy matters are much more aligned with views held by members of other party groups within the respective committees, who decide on whether or not to follow up with the motion, than is the case with views expressed in the motions submitted by ENF members.

While EFDD may have a higher rate of motions for resolutions that reach plenary than the ENF, both groups are equally unsuccessful in terms of getting their motions for resolutions passed. Not a single foreign policy related motion proposed by either EFDD or ENF alone have passed in the EP during its current term. Four motions submitted by EFDD and six motions submitted by ENF have been rejected by other members during plenary sittings. Most motions proposed by the two groups tend to ‘fall’. This jargon term used in the protocols and voting records of the EP needs further elaboration. Rule 174 in the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament sets out the order of voting on amendments. The order is the following: in the case of two or more mutually exclusive amendments that have been tabled to the same part of a text, the amendment which is furthest from the original text is voted on first. If that amendment is adopted, the other amendments shall be considered rejected. If the amendment is rejected, the amendment next in line is voted on. However, the President of the EP has discretion and may first put the original text or an amendment closer to the original to the vote, before the amendment that departs furthest from the original text. If either of these receives a majority of the votes, all other amendments proposed to the same part of the text fall (European Parliament 2017a). In other words, the term ‘fall’ means that if an amendment or a resolution has been adopted, it would render the proposed new text, which is further away from the original text than the amendment adopted, as null and void and could no longer be put to the vote. The EFDD group has had 31 motions fall, while the ENF has had 7 similar cases.



**Figure 2. Motions for resolutions tabled by EFDD and ENF, which were not combined with other motions (joint motions for resolutions).** Based on an original dataset collected through the European Parliament database by the author.

### **Roll-call votes: who votes with EFDD and ENF?**

During the current term of the EP, there have been 10 occasions, where motions for resolutions proposed by EFDD or ENF have been voted upon in plenary sessions. As demonstrated by Figure 2, most motions put forth by the two groups that have made it to the plenary have simply fallen. Motions submitted by ENF have been voted on in plenary on six occasions, and four motions have been put to a roll-call vote. All six motions have failed to gather necessary support for passing as a resolution. Motions proposed by EFDD have been voted on in plenary on four occasions, and two motions have been put to a roll-call vote. Similarly to motions by ENF members, none of the four motions tabled by EFDD have been supported enough for them to be passed as resolutions. Table 4 (see p. 53) includes data on motions for resolutions that were submitted by EFDD and ENF and were voted on during plenary sessions with roll-call votes.

**Table 4. Motions for resolutions tabled by EFDD and ENF that reached the plenary and were voted upon with roll-call votes.**

	<b>EFDD</b>	<b>ENF</b>
<b>Motions for resolutions with roll-call votes</b>	2	4
<b>Rejected</b>	2	4
<b>Approved</b>	0	0

Based on an original dataset collected through the European Parliament database by the author.

The six resolutions tabled by EFDD and ENF that were decided upon with roll-call votes are examined more closely now. Voting records obtained from the European Parliament Plenary database are analysed to see, which members and political groups vote along with members of EFDD and ENF, and if there exists recurring cooperation between EFDD and/or ENF and other party groups in the EP. The topic and content of the motions for resolutions will also be discussed to shed light to the views and attitudes of the EFDD and ENF groups in particular foreign policy matters. These six case studies are by no means intended to be an exhaustive account of the way EFDD and ENF conduct foreign policy in the EP, given that there are other means for voicing foreign policy views in the EP, such as parliamentary speeches, debates, questions and reports. However, the following analysis of six motions for resolutions does offer an insight into the foreign policy agenda of EFDD and ENF on several issues. In addition, examining voting records will indicate, which views held by the EFDD and ENF groups in certain foreign policy topics gain broader support among other party groups within the EP, and if these instances are exceptional cases or recurring cases of cooperation, not depending on the issue at hand. The motions for resolutions will be analysed in a chronological order and are organised by their topic and the submitting group.

#### **China's market economy status (submitted by both EFDD and ENF)**

The issue of China's market economy status was discussed in plenary in May 2016. Both the EFDD and ENF groups proposed a motion for resolution on the matter. The motion submitted by members of EFDD called for the partnership between China and the EU to be based on fair trade relations complying fully with rules set by the World Trade

Organisation (WTO), mutual respect, equal cooperation and the aim of improving standards of human and labour rights. It also advised the European Commission not to grant China market economy status under EU criteria. In addition, the motion demanded that the Commission should carry out trade negotiations with China without accepting pressure in the form of deadlines and unilateral positions. It also stressed the importance of the EP in deciding over the matter and expressed fear over the negative impact on the EU economy, if China was to be given market economy status, citing recent negative impact on the steel sector in the UK (European Parliament 2016). The motion was put to a roll-call vote and it received 54 votes in favour, which was not enough for it to pass as a resolution. 32 members from EFDD voted in favour, but their motion received support from other political groups as well. Among those who voted with the EFDD were 9 members of the ENF group, 4 members from the European United Left–Nordic Green Left group (GUE/NGL), 3 members from the group Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), 2 members from the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), 1 representative of the European People’s Party (EPP) and 3 members of the EP not affiliated with any political group (NA) (European Parliament 2016a).

The motion tabled by ENF stressed that China was not a market economy and urged the Commission not to grant China such a status. The motion also highlighted the negative impact in the steel sector of the EU due to Chinese overproduction, citing a study, which concluded the possible loss of 3.5 million jobs in the EU, if China was granted market economy status. Moreover, the motion called the Commission to consider warnings and concerns expressed by industry representatives in the EU and demanded the strengthening of an ‘effective trade defence’ (European Parliament 2016b). The motion was put to a roll-call vote and it collected 58 votes in favour, which was higher than the support for a motion submitted by EFDD. However, the support for EFDD was broader, because the motion by ENF received support from only their own members, from the EFDD and from non-affiliated members. 30 members from ENF voted in favour of the motion, in addition to 20 members from EFDD and 8 non-affiliated members (European Parliament 2016a). The issue was debated in plenary on 10 May 2016. The debate started with statements by representatives of the Council Presidency and the Commission. David Borrelli spoke on behalf of EFDD, and called for the EU to consider the interests of the steel industry and accused the Commission of not defending the general interest:

China is not a market economy, everyone recognizes it, perhaps even China itself. /.../ And certainly no one feels reassured by the incredible statements of the Commission of a limited impact. Ours is an accusation: you are not defending the general interest, but a sterile zero-sum equation between jobs lost and jobs created, which in fact only defends the liberal and mercantilist interests. (European Parliament 2016c)

Following him, Marine Le Pen delivered a statement on behalf of ENF, arguing against granting China a market economy status and criticising the EU for a failed trade policy:

/.../ You promised Europeans that the Chinese would be content with the low-end and that we would develop the industry of the future. The Chinese sell us today televisions, telephones, internet networks, and so on. It is a huge field of ruins that your irresponsible policy has left on our soil. /.../ Do you want to trigger another disaster, or will you stop rendering powerless the Member States of the European Union? There is another way than this absolute free trade carrying ruins and conflicts: it is a reasonable protection on the borders, it is the intelligent protectionism which allows the countries to develop their industry, their employment, their wealth /.../ (European Parliament 2016c)

Matteo Salvini from ENF also spoke, and said that China was not a market economy, and expressed hope that a more democratic Europe was on the horizon:

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, this is the debate that confirms that Europe does not exist. /.../ Someone wants to place some goods in China and therefore wants to slaughter the steel, ceramics, textiles, paper and glass industries. It's surreal. /.../ China is not a market economy. /.../ I hope that this Europe will die as soon as possible and another more serious, more democratic, freer and more modern will emerge in the shortest time possible. (European Parliament 2016c)

Other members from both EFDD and ENF groups also delivered a statement, mostly pointing to the possible negative effects that granting China market economy status would have on European jobs and the economy. Among others, Remo Sernagiotto from ECR, who voted for the motion proposed by EFDD, stated that China was not a market economy and referred to rights of workers and environmental rights in Europe as an

argument against the granting of market economy status to China (European Parliament 2016c).

### **EU guarantee to the European Investment Bank for investment projects in Belarus (EFDD)**

The issue at hand in this case was the delegated decision of the Commission from April 2016 to amend a decision jointly adopted by the EP and the Council of the EU in 2014 about granting an EU guarantee to the European Investment Bank against losses under financing operations supporting investment projects outside the EU, as regards Belarus. The motion submitted by EFDD in June 2016 objected to the decision made by the Commission, claiming it did not properly consider aspects regarding human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy in Belarus. The motion referred to several EU guiding documents on human rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to the human rights dialogue that the EU holds with Belarus. Moreover, the motion described Belarus as an autocratic state, tightly controlled by its President Aleksandr Lukashenko. The motion also stressed the harassment of journalists and human rights activists, the lack of opposition from the country's parliament and the continuing application of capital punishment (European Parliament 2016d). This motion was voted upon by roll-call voting, and it gathered the support of 113 MEPs, which was not enough to be passed as a resolution. Still, the motion was backed by MEPs from all political groups in the EP, apart from the group of Greens–European Free Alliance (Verts/ALE). Out of 113 votes in favour, 41 came from EFDD, 39 from the S&D group, 11 from GUE/NGL, 10 from the EPP, 4 from both the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and ENF groups, and 1 from the ECR. In addition, 3 non-affiliated members also voted in favour of the motion (European Parliament 2016e). Thus, the motion received broad support from MEPs across ideological stances and political groups, although that was not enough to get the motion passed.

According to the protocol of the session, there was no debate on the motion, except for one speaker: a MEP from ALDE, who called for the respect for human rights and urged fellow MEPs to vote for another motion for resolution, which also objected the Commission's decision, as did the one submitted by EFDD (European Parliament 2016d).



### **Situation of journalists in Turkey (ENF)**

The situation of journalists in Turkey was discussed in plenary in late October 2016. The ENF group proposed a motion for resolution on the situation of journalists in Turkey. The motion cited the worsened press freedom in Turkey, mentioned the ongoing candidate status of Turkey for EU membership, and accused Turkey of severely restricting freedom of speech and media freedom. It also mentioned negative effects of violation of media freedom in Turkey on European citizens, restrictions on certain Internet platforms, and treatment of religious and minority groups, refusal to recognise Cyprus and ‘ambiguity regarding terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq’. The motion called on the Council of the EU to stop accession negotiations with Turkey and demanded the Turkish government to respect democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights (European Parliament 2016f). The motion was put to a roll-call vote and it received 83 votes in favour, which was not enough for it to pass as a resolution. Most of the votes in favour came from two political groups: ENF, who tabled the motion, supported it with 32 MEPs, while 36 members from EFDD were also in favour. In addition, 3 members from S&D and ECR backed the motion, as did 2 MEPs from EPP and 1 MEP from the ALDE group. 6 non-affiliated members of the EP also supported the motion (European Parliament 2016g).

The issue was debated in plenary a day before the vote, on 26 October 2016. The debate started with a statement by Corina Crețu, Commissioner for Regional Policy, who was representing the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP). Edouard Ferrand spoke on behalf of ENF and focused his statement on possible Turkish accession to the EU, which he opposed. His brief statement ended with a claim that European people want a free Europe of nations and freedoms:

Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, today is Turkey’s day. Mr Juncker announced this morning that he will resume negotiations with Turkey. /.../ Today, we are made to cry with Turkish journalists, but finally wake up! Do you want Turkey in Europe? Do you want Turkey to do the same to European journalists? /.../ I believe that what the European peoples want is a Europe of nations and freedoms, a Europe without the Muslim Brotherhood of Mr Erdoğan. They want a free Europe, another Europe, the Europe of nations and freedoms. (European Parliament 2016h)

Beatrix von Storch from EFDD, who backed the motion in a vote, went further and urged that Turkey must not be accepted into the EU:

Turkey ranks number 151 out of 180 in the international ranking of press freedom. We are more or less affected by this, depending on the current blackmail situation in the refugee issue. And you still want to accept Turkey in the EU. /.../ We are upset about Poland, ranked 47th in the press, near the US, the UK and France. Therefore: stop, leave the Poles alone, and do not let Turkey into the EU! (European Parliament 2016h)

In a later statement, von Storch also said that the Turkish president ‘will certainly never share the values we share’ (European Parliament 2016h). Two other MEPs from EFDD were also very critical towards Turkey, although in milder terms, referring to the need to protect media freedom and fundamental rights and for the EU to demand this from the country, with Isabella Adinolfi representing the core of both statements:

I believe that the detention of journalists for the content of their articles and the closure of a very large number of information centres are aspects that dangerously threaten the democracy of a country. The European Union cannot stand by and need decisive action to respect the fundamental rights of every human being. (European Parliament 2016h)

One MEP from ECR, Nikolay Barekov, who also voted for the motion tabled by ENF, also called for the protection of freedom of speech, criticised European leaders who had made deals with Mr Erdoğan and called the actions of the Turkish regime on freedom of speech a genocide. Georgios Epitideios, a non-attached member who voted in favour of the motion by ENF, criticised the actions of the Turkish government as regards to journalists and claimed that Turkey was extorting the EU (European Parliament 2016h).

### **Situation in Syria (ENF)**

In November 2016, the ENF submitted a motion for resolution on the situation in Syria. The motion, which reached plenary, concerned a statement made by the HR/VP in October 2016, and referred to growing hostilities in the country that were causing a large number of civilian casualties. The motion condemned attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure and stressed the ‘ambiguous role’ of Turkey in the conflict. The

motion included a claim that oil from ISIS-controlled territories was being exported to Turkey, which provided extra funds for terrorist activities in Syria and Europe. It also condemned Turkey's support for opposition groups, which were infiltrated by jihadists. Lastly, the motion called for a lasting political solution to the conflict (European Parliament, 2016i). The motion was voted upon in a roll-call vote and it collected 55 votes in favour. Most of the votes supporting the motion came from two political groups, with 32 members from ENF and 13 members from EFDD backing the motion. In addition, 6 non-affiliated MEPs, 3 members from ECR and 1 member from S&D were in favour of the motion (European Parliament 2016j).

The issue was debated in plenary on 22 November 2016. The first speaker in the debate was Federica Mogherini, the HR/VP, who gave an overview of the situation in Syria. Harald Vilimsky delivered a statement on behalf of ENF, calling out the Islamic State as the aggressor in the Syrian conflict and warning about a geopolitical conflict between the United States and Russia:

*/.../ in the case of the Syrian conflict, I have the impression that here the two great powers – the Americans and the Russians – are not acting in sufficient unity to eradicate the actual aggressor, namely the Islamic State, but rather that this conflict is used to geopolitically raise a conflict between the Americans and the Russians. That's the wrong way. /.../ Meanwhile, we have a new president of the United States of America and I have the impression that there is more will, there is more willingness to work together to neutralize this real aggressor – the Islamic State. The sooner it succeeds in neutralizing this conflict, the faster all those who have come to Europe can go back to their homeland to help stabilize and rebuild their country. (European Parliament 2016k)*

Kristina Winberg from EFDD also spoke, condemning Gulf States for not having taken in migrants, while the EU had, but also criticizing the Commission for its undemocratic nature:

*/.../ In the conflict, a total of over 300,000 people have died and millions are in flight. The EU has received many migrants while the Gulf States in the vicinity do almost nothing. This despite the fact that they share the same culture and languages in many cases. /.../ However, I would like to emphasize what failure the EU's common foreign policy has been in this conflict. EU Member States are welcome to sit on the sidelines and watch while the non-democratically*

elected EU Commission sets the agenda. What has this caused? Well, Europe's role in the world has been reduced to waiting for what the United States and Russia are doing, and then standing here and voting on resolutions. Europe's and especially my country's role in the world was much stronger before the EU existed. (European Parliament, 2016k)

Marcus Pretzell, a MEP belonging to ENF, mentioned in his statement the refugee crisis and terrorist attacks in Europe, and blamed Turkey as being part of the problem:

*/.../ In Aleppo, the same terrorists are being fought as in Paris, Brussels and other European cities. /.../ Assad is a dictator - no question about that. But trying to eradicate it has plunged Syria into chaos, sparked a wave of refugees heading towards Europe, sweeping terrorists into Europe, and also initiating migration from Africa and other parts of the world to Europe. /.../ Turkey is part of the problem – Turkey, which was previously a partner of the European Union. The US is part of the problem. And yes, certainly Russia will have to contribute to the solution. But it is not enough to strike Russia at this point. (European Parliament 2016k)*

Franz Obermayr, also from ENF, echoed a similar argument regarding Russia, saying that with Russia's involvement from the very beginning of the conflict, millions of people would not be living under constant siege, thousands would not have died, and millions would not be fleeing (European Parliament 2016k).

### **Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between the EU and Canada (ENF)**

The topic of the EU-Canada trade deal (CETA) was under discussion in the EP in February 2017. ENF tabled a motion for resolution on the matter, calling for the EP not to give its consent to CETA. The motion stressed the need for public debate that should be held before the opening of any further trade negotiations, together with defining undisputable standards for the agreement. The motion also cited the precautionary principle as one of the pillars of EU consumer and environmental protection. It also referenced citizens' initiatives against the trade deal undertaken in EU member states and in Canada, criticised the lack of transparency during the negotiations of the agreement, expressed fears over the livelihood of some actors in the European agriculture sector and opposed the supranational character of the institutions that would be set up according to

the deal (European Parliament 2017b). The motion was put to a roll-call vote and it gathered the backing of 82 members. 39 MEPs from ENF, who proposed the motion, voted in favour, along with 22 MEPs from EFDD. In addition, 6 members from the GUE/NGL group, 4 members from ECR and 11 non-attached MEPs also supported the motion (European Parliament 2017c).

The issue was debated in plenary on the same day of the vote, 15 February 2017. Artis Pabriks (EPP) was the first speaker as rapporteur and urged members of the EP to vote for giving the EP's consent to CETA. Charles Tannock (ECR), the second rapporteur, delivered a similar message, highlighting the benefits of the agreement. Tiziana Beghin, a member of EFDD, spoke on behalf of her colleagues and urged MEPs to vote against CETA, citing concerns about an undemocratic oversight body that the treaty would establish, the privatisation of public services, reduced wages and non-transparent negotiations by 'unelected technocrats'. Marine Le Pen, on behalf of ENF, followed with a statement, also urging MEPs not to support CETA. The opposition of the ENF group included the following arguments:

The CETA treaty has been carefully hidden from all citizens. It has almost never been discussed before the major debates in the media because none of you want or can defend it publicly. /.../ It removes almost all tariffs on products traded between the European Union and Canada and will destroy, once again, hundreds of thousands of jobs in Europe, tens of thousands in France. Agriculture and livestock, already rolled by all free trade agreements that you have already signed, will continue their descent into hell. /.../ I solemnly ask you: are you not ashamed to destroy those who feed you? /.../ The different committees you set up, such as these obscure regulatory cooperation mechanisms, are supranational in nature and are not controlled by anyone, so much so that great French jurists question their constitutionality. /.../ (European Parliament 2017d)

Members from the EFDD and ENF groups also criticized the trade agreement, claiming that CETA was intended by the EU to advance its foreign policy goals by trading away the sovereignty of member states. Matteo Salvini from ENF voiced his opposition to CETA and claimed that tens of thousands of jobs in Italy and in France will be lost, if the agreement enters into force. Salvini also appealed to European leaders and executives:

/.../ But I tell you that Brexit, Trump and the elections in Holland, France, Germany, Italy and Austria are proving that the people are waking up. So, hurry up and make the latest gifts to your friends, because people are coming to pick you up. Get ready to pack up to go to Canada or China, who are waiting for you with open arms. (European Parliament 2017d)

Marcel de Graaff from ENF compared CETA to a step towards dictatorship and poverty, and claimed that his group truly represented the people and fought for their freedom. Some MEPs from other political groups, who voted for the motion submitted by ENF, also expressed their views on the matter. Urszula Krupa from ECR criticized the possible loss of jobs in the EU and in Poland, and the undemocratic manner of talks between the EU and Canada:

I voted against /.../ Both due to the document being developed in a secret manner, with the possible influence of third parties on the negotiation process, but without the participation of governments and parliaments of individual EU Member States, and without the participation of social parties, which is a violation of the basic principles of democracy. There is also a danger of losing the sovereignty of Member States in law-making and protecting the public interest. /.../ (European Parliament 2017d)

A member from GUE/NGL, Luke Ming Flanagan, who also voted in favour of the motion proposed by ENF, also claimed that the negotiation process had not been democratic:

Madam President, I am here to represent the people and I would imagine most of us are here to represent the people. The problem is that the person who went out and negotiated this agreement has said that she does not take her mandate from the people. What sort of a democracy is this, where we send someone out to negotiate on our behalf and she brazenly says to us that she does not take her mandate from the people? I suppose she is being honest, unlike a lot of the other Commissioners. /.../ (European Parliament 2017d)

Several members from GUE/NGL voted for the ENF motion but did not participate in the debate. However, the position of the GUE/NGL group during the debate was similar to ENF's, at least in terms of not to give the EP's consent to the agreement.

### 3.4. General findings

There are several important findings that the analysis above demonstrates. First, contrary to conventional wisdom, populist right-wing and Eurosceptic groups in the EP, the EFDD and the ENF, are not completely excluded, when it comes to motions for resolutions and gaining support for them. In other words, there are members in other political groups of the EP who are sympathetic to the foreign policy views, as expressed by EFDD and ENF in their motions for resolutions, or at least share attitudes on particular foreign policy issues. This finding cuts across political, ideological and national boundaries within the EP. Moreover, EFDD and ENF themselves are interested in voicing their foreign policy agendas through motions for resolutions, not only via parliamentary debate.

Second, motions for resolutions submitted by EFDD and ENF continuously attract supporters from other political groups in the EP. However, there is a significant difference here as regards to motions submitted by EFDD and motions proposed by ENF. As Table 5 (see p. 65) demonstrates, motions tabled by EFDD tend to gain broader support in the chamber, compared to motions authored by members of the ENF group. In one occasion, regarding an EU guarantee against losses in investment projects in Belarus, the motion tabled by EFDD received votes in favour from all political groups, except from Verts/ALE. On another occasion, regarding the market economy status of China, the motion submitted by EFDD members gained the support of all political groups, except Verts/ALE and ALDE. In contrast, a motion for resolution proposed by ENF on the same issue received more yes-votes in total, but most of them came from the group's own members, and from EFDD and non-affiliated MEPs. Motions for resolutions on the situation in Syria and on the EU-Canada trade agreement (CETA) fared better but were still supported by only half of the political groups, plus non-affiliated members. There was one case, where a motion for resolution tabled by ENF received votes from almost all political groups, and that was the motion on the situation of journalists in Turkey. Here, only members from Verts/ALE and GUE/NGL did not offer their support to the motion.

Third, EFDD and ENF members tend to support each other's motions. In all six cases listed in Table 5, members from EFDD voted in favour of a motion proposed by ENF, and MEPs from the ENF group backed motions tabled by EFDD. This is even true, when

the two groups tabled motions of their own, as happened with the issue of China's market economy status. Still, there is at least one case, where ENF members were not very keen to support a motion tabled by EFDD, and that was the motion regarding an EU guarantee against losses in investment projects in Belarus. This motion, which received broad support in the chamber, was backed by only 4 ENF members, while as much as 39 MEPs from S&D and 10 members from EPP voted in favour of the motion. This shows that the cooperation on foreign policy matters between the EFDD and ENF groups, at least when it comes to motions for resolutions, depends on the particular foreign policy matters and on the views the MEPs from both groups hold. Sometimes, one group supports the other, because their own motion is not put to a vote. This happened with the motion tabled by EFDD on the situation in Syria, which fell in the plenary. Still, the number of MEPs, who then decided to support the motion proposed by ENF, was not very high (13). EFDD also tabled a motion on CETA, and it was rejected, but unlike the motion proposed by ENF, it was not decided upon by a roll-call vote. One very interesting case was, when the EP discussed the situation of journalists in Turkey. Both EFDD and ENF submitted their motions on the matter. However, the motion proposed by EFDD was merged into a joint resolution with other political groups and it passed. Nevertheless, as much as 36 MEPs from the EFDD group voted in favour of the motion submitted by ENF. Since there was no roll-call vote for the joint resolution that passed as a resolution, the number of EFDD members who voted in favour of it is not known.

Fourth, there exist certain patterns of cooperation and sympathies between other political groups and the EFDD and ENF. As Table 5 demonstrates, members not affiliated with any political group support motions for resolutions tabled by EFDD or ENF. This does not depend on the matter included in the motion, although some issues – or wording of the motion – receive more votes in favour than others. In addition, some members from the ECR group tend to vote for motions for resolutions proposed by EFDD and ENF, but these figures are not very high, given the more than 70 MEPs, who are part of ECR. The support from MEPs of other political groups seems to be issue-based and thus inconsistent. However, MEPs from the Verts/ALE group have not voted in favour of a single motion tabled by EFDD or ENF.



**Table 5. Roll-call votes in favour of motions for resolutions tabled by EFDD or ENF and discussed in plenary, according to political group.**

<b>Political group/resolution</b>	<b>China's market economy (EFDD)</b>	<b>China's market economy (ENF)</b>	<b>Investment in Belarus (EFDD)</b>	<b>Journalists in Turkey (ENF)</b>	<b>Situation in Syria (ENF)</b>	<b>CETA (ENF)</b>
<b>EFDD</b>	32	20	41	36	13	22
<b>ENF</b>	9	30	4	32	32	39
<b>ECR</b>	2		1	3	3	4
<b>EPP</b>	1		10	2		
<b>ALDE</b>			4	1		
<b>Verts/ALE</b>						
<b>S&amp;D</b>	3		39	3	1	
<b>GUE/NGL</b>	4		11			6
<b>NA</b>	3	8	3	6	6	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	54	58	113	83	55	82

Based on an original dataset collected through the European Parliament database by the author.

## Conclusion

The focus of this thesis has been populist foreign policy making by right-wing Eurosceptics in the European Parliament in the context of an increasing and widespread public and academic attention to populist parties and politicians. As stated in the introduction, populism is a contested concept, despite its frequent use. Still, the conceptual and theoretical overview presented in Chapter 1 demonstrated a broad understanding among scholars about the key feature of populism: an appeal to ‘the people’ and the denouncement of ‘the elite’. Other concepts that have been stressed by different authors include ‘general/popular will’ and ‘the heartland’. However, in addition to disagreements about the definition of the concept and what features of it deserve emphasis, there is no consensus about what populism actually is: an ideology, a political style or strategy, or a moralistic imagination of politics? This thesis has not been intended to pick a side on the conceptual debate about populism, but rather to move beyond the fact about the concept’s contestation, by discussing various strands within literature and interlinking frameworks of different scholars to clarify and explain the empirical part of this thesis. This approach has been supported by the inclusion of ‘Euroscepticism’, another contested concept, to the conceptual overview, which allowed to combine the two terms in order to provide a unique basis for the empirical research of this paper. A significant point to note here is that for many, if not all, parties described in Chapter 3, Euroscepticism makes up as important a part of their political views and ideology as populism does.

The purpose of this thesis has been to find out according to which rationale and in the light of which factors do populist right-wing Eurosceptic party groups conduct foreign policy in the European Parliament. This purpose has been fulfilled, as demonstrated by the empirical analysis in Chapter 3. In light of the research question, this thesis contributed five novel and significant findings. First, contrary to conventional wisdom, populist Eurosceptic party groups in the European Parliament do not spend their time only on heated speeches and debates, but actually take part in everyday parliamentary work, at least as regards to motions for resolutions. Second, there exists a gap in terms of involvement between populist right-wing party groups, with EFDD having had

remarkably more motions for resolutions that they submitted being discussed in plenary (175) than their colleagues from ENF (15). Moreover, motions proposed by EFDD members are much more often combined into joint motions for resolutions (140 for EFDD vs. 2 for ENF), indicating cooperation with other party groups. Third, EFDD and ENF are not completely excluded, when it comes to motions for resolutions and receiving support for them. Furthermore, motions submitted by the two groups continuously attract supporters from other political groups in the European Parliament. Fourth, there exists recurring cooperation between EFDD and ENF members, with both groups tending to support each other's motions in voting. The fifth and final finding illustrates that there exist certain patterns of cooperation between EFDD, ENF and other political groups, with non-affiliated MEPs and members of the ECR group supporting motions submitted by EFDD or ENF on a frequent basis, although the figures of support by ECR members are not very high. Support from MEPs belonging to other political groups is issue-based and thus inconsistent, while the Verts/ALE group has not supported EFDD or ENF for any motion that was examined in this thesis.

As noted before, populism is the political catchword of our times. Therefore, this thesis too is part of a wider context of increasing interest towards the topic in the media and the public debate. Yet, while research on populism and populist parties and policies enjoys widespread interest among scholars, it is also true that the populist right-wing party family is the most studied party family in political science, and this has been so since at least the 1990s (Mudde 2016: 23). What has this thesis then provided for, if it seems that much has been researched already? First, there is rarely any research on the foreign policy of populists. One notable exception is the collection of articles in a book called *Europe for the Europeans: the Foreign and Security Policy of the Populist Radical Right*. This claims to be the first book 'which attempts to describe the European populist radical right's foreign and security policy objectives' (Liang 2007: 2-3). Although it goes beyond from only focusing on specific foreign policy issues in populist agendas, this book was written in 2007. Needless to say, a lot has changed over the past 10 years, with populists having become increasingly popular throughout Europe. Thus, this thesis has offered new insights into the foreign policy agendas of populist right-wing and Eurosceptic parties and has also demonstrated how those parties conduct foreign policy in the European Parliament. Second, given the frequency of media reports, the focus of the political and

public debate on populists, and in the European context, also Eurosceptics, and the political gains of populist politicians, there is a need to provide consistent research on the topic to make sense of the phenomenon of populism. This thesis fulfils this demand and moreover, offers a novel perspective on populist foreign policy making, which seems increasingly necessary, given the scarcity of relevant literature and the success of populists in national politics across EU member states and beyond, making populists first-hand foreign policy actors.

Finally, this thesis was not designed to be an exhaustive account of populist foreign policy making in the European Parliament. Therefore, several directions exist for future research. One option to continue this analysis would be to apply the typology of strategies employed by Eurosceptic MEPs, as developed by Nathalie Brack (2015). This approach would require more time- and resource demanding research than conducted for this thesis, but it would provide interesting insights into the strategy of certain MEPs from populist and Eurosceptic party groups in advancing their foreign policy agendas. Another option for future research would be to include other units of analysis, in addition to motions for resolutions and parliamentary debates, such as questions by MEPs or their written explanations of votes. A review of all motions for resolutions submitted by populist right-wing Eurosceptic party groups, including those that are not followed up by responsible committees, would allow for a systematic analysis of populist foreign policy agendas, as conducted through the arena of the European Parliament. Ultimately, the recent political success of populist right-wing Eurosceptic parties in countries such as Austria or Italy, where those parties are or are expected to be part of coalition governments, requires further research about the populist foreign policy agenda and how it is conducted. One way to do this would be to examine the foreign policy views of those parties and then analyse their influence on the country's actual foreign policy, thus bridging the domestic and foreign elements of foreign policy research. At the same time, as noted before in this thesis, foreign policy has an impact on domestic policies and vice versa, especially in the EU, where the lines between different policy areas have blurred. As participants in the political and public debate, populist parties may therefore have an influence on foreign policy through the domestic level, even if they are not in the government. Therefore, the role played by populist Eurosceptic political actors in the shaping of the foreign policy debate within EU member states is an opportunity for future research. This would be

especially fascinating, when conducted about ‘new’ member states of the EU, and Central and Eastern European countries, who still remain rather under-researched in studies on populism and Euroscepticism.

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